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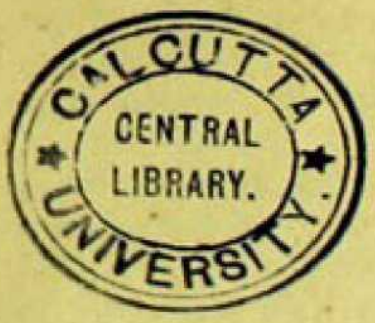
CALCUTTA ESSAYS
ON
SHAKESPEARE

EDITED BY
AMALENDU BOSE



CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY

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PREFACE

THE present volume of essays should have been published in 1964, the year of the four hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's birth ; its publication has been delayed by a number of unforeseeable circumstances.

All the contributors are or have been members of the University of Calcutta, as alumni or as teachers. Some attempt has been made in this volume to present an account of the response of the city of Calcutta, including of course the university, to Shakespeare ; this response is reflected in the history of Calcutta theatres, in the pedagogic tradition of Calcutta, in the creative literature of Bengal. The essay entitled 'Shakespeare in the Calcutta University', perhaps the first essay of its kind, mentions several distinguished scholars and professors to whose valuable teaching of Shakespeare generations of students of the university have been indebted. It has to be remembered in this connexion that the jurisdiction of the University of Calcutta was once far-flung, extending from Peshawar to Rangoon and therefore Shakespeare-teaching within this jurisdiction involved the responses of a wide variety of linguistic and cultural groups ; most colleges affiliated to the university had their shares of inspiring Shakespeare teachers and nearly all the languages spoken within this vast territory (which means all the North Indian languages) give some evidence of the influence of Shakespeare on their literatures. To prepare a full historical and evaluatory account of the significance of Shakespeare studies in the University of Calcutta should be taken up as a research project sponsored by the University Grants Commission.

We have provided for an essay on T. S. Eliot's response to Shakespeare and, as a counterpart to this essay, an essay examining Rabindranath Tagore's reaction to Shakespeare. The essay on 'Shakespeare and Sanskrit drama' presents another Indian angle on Shakespeare. The essay on 'Shakespeare in the class-room' offers the reactions of a Shakespeare teacher of today. The other essays attempt at interpreting and evaluating aspects of Shakespeare. Whether these essays offer any fresh and striking interpretation or not is for the reader to judge, but there should not be, it is hoped, any doubt about the contributors' devotion to the Shakespeare theme. 'Not of an age, but for all time', said Ben Jonson, and here in India we claim Shakespeare for all lands too. In *Shakespeare's England*, Sir Walter Raleigh said : "Shakespeare's admirers abroad do credit to him and to themselves, but they cannot teach the love of him to his friends at home. Their public homage is an empty thing to those who

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celebrate him more intimately, who love him best not for his power but for his humanity". As against this arrogant chauvinistic assertion, one would remember Rabindranath Tagore's lines included in *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare* (1916): "When by the far-away sea your fiery disk appeared from behind the unseen, O poet, O Sun, England's horizon felt you near her breast and took you to be her own ..... At this moment after the end of centuries, the palm groves by the Indian Sea raise their tremulous branches to the sky murmuring your praise". I may be permitted to repeat my comments made in this connexion elsewhere (*The Indian Journal of English Studies*, Vol. V, No. 1, 1964, p. 160): "Tagore was right, Ben Jonson was right, humbler folk like ourselves are right, in claiming universality for Shakespeare. There is no emptiness, notwithstanding Sir Walter Raleigh, in our homage. Shakespeare today is an authentic part of the Indian literary consciousness." The present volume is a modest expression of that homage.

On behalf of the postgraduate department of English of the University of Calcutta, I must thank the Syndicate for providing us with the funds for the publication of this volume. I must also thank the contributors for their ready response to my editorial suggestions.

February, 1966 A. BOSE

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SHYLOCK, OTHELLO AND CALIBAN :

Shakespearian Variations on the Theme of Apartheid

SIBNARAYAN RAY

"We need more light to find your meaning out".
Love's Labour's Lost. V, ii, 21.

"Imprisoned, by you, in the mood doubtful, loaded, by you, with distressing embarrassments, we are, we submit, in no position to set *any one* free".
The Collected Poetry of W. H. Auden, Part VIII, "The Sea and the Mirror". III, Caliban to the Audience, p. 374.

UNLIKE Goethe, Tolstoi, Tagore, or some of his other literary peers, Shakespeare never wrote any statement of his personal beliefs. It is, of course, open to question if such statements really help our appreciation of a work of literature. Surrealism may be an extreme doctrine, but at least since Pindar's time it has been recognized that the creative process is only partly deliberate, that between an artist's conscious intentions and his finished work there is a mysterious weaving and unweaving which even the most rigorous disciplines of classicism may not hope entirely to control or manipulate. In fact, a writer's own declaration of faith could sometimes very well be as far removed from what was actually communicated by his poem or play or novel as a politician's professions usually are from his performance. The marvellous multivalence of Bertolt Brecht's finest plays, for example, would seem to owe little or nothing to the narrow geometry of his communist faith.[1]

Nevertheless, critics have time and again tried to derive from Shakespeare's poems and plays some kind of a *weltanschauung* which would provide a key to his spiritual biography. This meta-aesthetic quest began with the Romantics; with the Victorians it became almost an obsession. It is no longer very fashionable, but even in this century we have been offered several quasi-philosophical portraits of this "Johannes Factotum" modelled variously on Seneca, Machiavelli, Montaigne, Hegel, Nietzsche, Marx or Freud. Generally, they tell us more about the interpreters than about their subject. But the

temptation is strong, and one wonders if it will ever disappear. However much we admire Shakespeare's word-magic and marvellous manscapes, we are no less impressed by his profound pre-occupation with many of the perennial problems of human existence. It is this pre-occupation which inclines his admirers to search for some unifying philosophy in his writings. The search may prove to be an exercise in futility, but some consideration of his handling of these problems is possibly not altogether without bearing upon our appreciation of his works.

In any case I propose in this essay to consider one such problem which seems to have exercised Shakespeare in several of his plays. The issue of apartheid, in its larger signification, is not peculiar to contemporary South Africa. It has been present in most, if not all, civilized societies where people of different races, religions or cultures are forced for one reason or another to live together but without any genuine relation or feeling of equality, friendship, affinity, or mutual regard. Broadly speaking, the dominant community holds in arrogant contempt the one that is dominated; the latter, on its part, is driven to reluctant subservience, smouldering hatred and fear, and clandestine schemes of revenge. Even where, from considerations of self-interest, members of the former do happen to recognize, or even value, the worth of some very distinguished member of the latter, this recognition invariably falls short of intimacy or true understanding so that the relation is readily vulnerable to subversive pressures. It is a heart-breaking problem to those who believe in human brotherhood, but after more than four thousand years of civilization we are presumably still very far from any happy solution, despite many universalist movements and egalitarian reforms. The Greek or the Chinese attitude to the so-called barbarians, or the Hindu attitude to the indigenous untouchables was certainly no worse than the Christian attitude to the Jews, or the white colonists' attitude to coloured Asians, Negroes, Red Indians, or the Aborigines. In fact, today, in the twilight of Western dominance, the problem is revealed in all its horror and ugly tenacity. Built-in distrusts and hatreds between adjacent communities seem to be more ubiquitous in our present day experience than they were supposed to be even by our most cynical predecessors.

Shakespeare's interest in this problem thus has a pressing contemporary relevance. I am not sure why he was drawn to it; probably it was due more to the general developments of his age than to any personal experience of his own. The rise of the new bourgeoisie presumably gave a sharp twist to the predicament of enterprising Jews in a predominantly Christian Europe.[2] The spirit of the Renaissance might have encouraged a more sympathetic reassessment of the much-feared Moors. The discovery of the New World stirred up an interest

in the strange natives of that mysterious continent and raised in sensitive minds the issue of the moral propriety of colonization.[3] It was an age of explorations, both physical and spiritual. The old habit of parochial complacence was somewhat in disarray, but the arrogant attitude of ethnic-cultural superiority was not yet fully re-established. In the minds of some at least there was a sharper awareness of other communities, races and cultures, sharper and, therefore, richer in insight, but obviously not altogether free from habitual tribalist prejudices. This awareness and unfreedom are both reflected in varying degrees in Shakespeare's handling of the problem in three of his major plays.

II

The Merchant of Venice has no real hero but only the heroine. In this it is not unique among Shakespeare's comedies. Viola, Rosalind, and Beatrice also dominate their respective plays. What is peculiar to *The Merchant of Venice* is the character of the villain who, although he is eventually defeated by the heroine, continues virtually throughout the play to grip our attention equally with her. We are nowhere called upon to like or admire him; he is mean, cruel and vindictive; but he seems to possess a volcanic quality which is altogether uncommon in a romantic comedy, and which tempted early actors like Henderson to represent him as "a black Lear".[4] He occupies the stage in only five scenes, but since Edmund Kean's first appearance in this part in 1814, a succession of great actors has presented Shylock as the main character of *The Merchant of Venice*—from Macready, Booth, Irving, Tree, and Forbes-Robertson to Shroeder, Schildkraut, Gielgud, Wolfit, Redgrave and Peter O'Toole.

What, then, is the source of Shylock's predominance? The way he appears to the rest of the characters in the play is in no significant respect different from the archetypal concept of the "wicked Jew" in Christian prejudice. He is a mean and miserly money-lender, an "infidel" conspiring against Christian citizens, "a kind of devil", "the shape of a man So keen and greedy as to confound a man", a "damned inexecrable dog" whose "desires Are wolvish, bloody, starv'd and ravenous", one, in short, who deserves only "a halter gratis". Even to his daughter, their "house is hell". When she eventually runs away with her Christian lover, Shylock's "confused passion" is stirred more by the loss of money than by the loss of his daughter. Not only is this gloatingly reported by the pair Salerio and Solanio (II, viii), but Shakespeare in a memorable scene (III, i) takes pains to confirm this out of the Jew's mouth: "I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear: Would she were hears'd

at my foot, and the ducate in her coffin". This scene, if nothing else in the play, would give reason to suspect that Shylock's creator was hardly less prejudiced against the Jew than his contemporary audience.

However, there are at least two important elements in the composition of the play which prevent Shylock from completely degenerating into merely a Christian caricature of the Jew. Firstly, Shakespeare's Venice is put on a moral plane scarcely higher than Shylock's own : at least the playwright does not seem to be terribly impressed with its stance of injured moral superiority. In the very opening scene we are presented with Antonio's *entourage* which consists of a group of idle young parasites who live on his bounty and vie with one another to humour their lugubrious patron. Among them, Solanio and Salerio later on show positively sadistic traits ; how they torment Shylock and provoke him to his famous outburst in III, i ! What is no less shocking is their utterly callous attitude to Antonio's misfortune,[5] and one almost suspects that they are deliberately goading Shylock to extreme action. (Thus, after rousing the Jew to anguished anger over his daughter's flight, Salerio hypocritically asks : "but tell us, do you hear whether Antonio have had any loss at sea or no ?" and then before Shylock has had time to remind us of the terms of his bond, Salerio again provokingly exclaims : "Why I am sure if he forfeit, thou wilt not take his flesh,—what's that good for ?"). Gratiano, in the words of his dear friend Bassanio, "speaks an infinite deal of nothing"; but he is clever enough to share in his friend's fortune-hunting ("We are the Jasons", he exclaims, "we have won the fleece", III, ii); he is also an expert in bawdry, and in the trial scene, he reveals himself as a most disagreeable bully. Lorenzo not only steals Jessica but also her father's ducats and jewels. As for Bassanio, already in the opening scene, we know that he is a prodigal, that he owes Antonio much ("and, like a wilful youth, That which I owe is lost"), and that in "pure innocence" he is now cadging for another loan to hazard on a new gamble.

> In Belmont is a lady richly left,
> ... ...
> And many Jasons come to quest of her.
> O my Antonio, had I but the means
> To hold a rival place with one of them,
> I have a mind presages me such thrift
> That I should questionless be fortunate. (I, i, 161-176)

His motivation is thus largely mercenary (as it happens to be of all Venetian men), and there is little in the play to suggest that he truly loves Portia or is a Venetian Romeo.[6] Compared to him both Morocco and Arragon seem nobler and more honest ; his stilted philosophisings in the casket scene clearly contradict his earlier confession to Antonio

in the first scene and his chief consideration for coming to Belmont. In any case, it is not Bassanio but Portia who gives and hazards all she has (he does not even mention the inscriptions on the caskets), and there is good reason to suspect that the song was pre-arranged by Portia to help Bassanio discreetly in making the right choice.[7] Bassanio certainly is fortunate in friendship and marriage, but Shakespeare made no effort to establish that he even remotely deserved his good fortune.

Antonio, of course, is a true and genuine friend, but otherwise his humanity is extremely circumscribed. In his attitude and behaviour to Shylock he seems almost to anticipate the Nazis (who, incidentally, also greatly prized male friendship). His delicate Christian conscience finds nothing wrong in spitting upon Shylock's Jewish gaberdine, in voiding his rheum upon the old man's beard, in calling him dog, or in footing him as he would "spurn a stranger cur" over his threshold. In fact, he proudly asserts :

> I am as like to call thee again,
> To spet on thee again, to spurn thee too. (I, iii, 125-26)

No wonder that inspired by the example of their noble friend and patron, Gratiano, Salerio and Solanio should conduct themselves towards Shylock the way they do.

Such then is Venice, which brings us to the second element in the play's composition. The volcanic quality in Shylock derives no less from his personality than from his position in Venetian society. Being a Jew his place in this society is inexorably defined. Do what he may, he will always be an outsider, an alien despised, mistrusted and persecuted by the majority community. Shakespeare's Venice is presumably a fictionalised name for Elizabethan England where since the reign of Edward I Jews had been legally banned. Actually, however, they were allowed to live in London provided they became Christians or at least conformed outwardly to Christianity.[8] In contemporary English literature, the Jew was invariably presented as a cunning conspiratorial figure, malicious, unclean and grotesque.[9] He was tolerated as long as he was prepared to serve as the butt of common ridicule. The Jew dog might wear his "badge of suff'rance" and live in his ghetto, but let him beware if he managed to prosper, or dreamt of competing with Christians.[10]

Now the persecuted outsider is potentially always a moving figure, provided he is seen not merely as he appears to the Establishment but as he sees himself. This is what Shakespeare seems to do in this play although that was obviously not his whole intention. And thus Shylock acquires, at least temporarily, a dimension of intense self-consciousness, which is denied to the Christians because they are so assured of their privileged position. When on his first appearance he asks Antonio :

> Shall I bend low, and in a bondman's key
> With bated breath, and whisp'ring humbleness

Say this:
"Fair Sir, you spet on me on Wednesday last,
You spurn'd me such a day, another time
You call'd me dog: and for these courtesies
I'll lend you thus much moneys?" (I, iii, 118-124)

—we begin to feel disturbed and unsure of Venice's scale of values. But it is only later on, when in deep anguish, he cries out:

I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is?—if you prick us do we not bleed? if you tickle us do we not laugh? if you poison us do we not die? and if you wrong us shall we not revenge? (III, i, 53-60)

—that suddenly the neat and conventional picture of the villainous Jew is blown to pieces, and we are introduced to the possibility that his situation may be much more truly tragic than that of his melancholy rival against whose life he had so cunningly schemed.

But only introduced, for as I have already said, this was not Shakespeare's whole intention. Shylock is not allowed to grow into a tragic figure. Shakespeare sees to that in what follows immediately after this powerful outburst: the grotesque dialogue between Shylock and Tubal (III, i, 72-120). The inconvenient insight is blacked out with ruthless deliberation so that the audience may, with Bassanio, Gratiano *et al*, exult, without any sense of guilt, in Portia's triumph in the trial scene. However, Portia's victory is not that of compassion over cruelty, of love over hate, or of the New Testament over the Old, as many Christian critics would have us believe.[11] Her praises of mercy fit ill with her later insistence that the Jew shall have the full rigours of justice according to the strict letter of the law. In any case, she wins by her ingenious interpretation of the strange laws of Venice and, one suspects, because the Court is clearly prejudiced against the Jew.[12] The important point is that in the end the Jew is crushingly punished, expropriated and given the option "to presently become a Christian", and in the last Act, his offensive presence is removed from the stage that the Christian audience may share fully in the jollity of Belmont where "the floor of heaven Is thick inlaid with patens of bright gold", and the sweet wind gently kisses the trees, and manna drops in the way of starved people, and no recalcitrant outsider ever enters to disturb the angelic harmony of cultivated innocence. (Jessica, of course, is no outsider, for, although she is "issue to a faithless Jew", she has already redeemed herself and become part of the Christian Establishment by disowning her father, religion and race). The upstart crow from Stratford, now somewhat established in life and waiting for a

Grant of Arms, did indeed raise a potentially explosive question, but, thank goodness, in the end, the chap had the decency or discretion not to press it too far or too hard.

III

The Merchant was written round about 1595-96; in art as in his social life, Shakespeare had not yet fully arrived. Between 1599 and 1609 we find him at the height of his powers, his creative plenitude bursting all bounds, dazzlingly multi-splendoured in the wit and humour of his great comedies, breathtakingly adventuresome in exploring the darkest depths of human suffering and despair.[13] Never before or after were his sympathies more catholic, his imagination more untramelled, his experiments more daring or less respectful of the conventional rules of decorum. And so, sometime about 1604, the outsider returns in Othello, this time a "black and begrim'd" Moor, not an Arab as some thin-skinned Shakespeare-lovers would wish to make-believe, but a "veritable negro", albeit of royal blood and high rank.[14] The scene in the first act is again Venice, but it is a Venice threatened by the Turks. Moreover, there is an important difference in Venice's attitude to the Moor as contrasted to the Jew. Europe's colour-prejudice may mistakenly stress his "sooty bosom" and "thick lips", but this is at least partially modified by recollections of the achievements of the Moors in the later Middle Ages.[15] In any case, there is an element of ambivalence in the Venetian attitude: the Moor inspires awe and incomprehension, but rarely contempt. Shakespeare's own notion moves between two extremes, of Aaron in *Titus Andronicus* ("his soul black like his face", III, i, 205), and of Morocco in *The Merchant* ("if he have the condition of a saint, and the complexion of a devil", I, ii, 123-24), and in *Othello*, it is the second notion that is developed. The Moor is undoubtedly coal-black and fearful to look on; he comes from a dark world of mystery and magic; but he is essentially noble, whom the full senate of Venice "call all-in-all sufficient".

This inner nobility is constantly stressed in the play, both in Othello's behaviour and in the way most Venetians speak of him. From his magnificently calm and confident order in I, ii: "Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust 'em" to the no less superbly self-controlled farewell speech: "one that lov'd not wisely, but too well", we are never in doubt, not even at the nadir of his spiritual decline where he cross-examines Emilia and calls Desdemona "that cunning whore of Venice" (IV, ii), about his intrinsic goodness which Iago may abuse but cannot permanently corrupt. To the Duke, he is "valiant Othello", "far more fair than black"; to Montano, he is "a full soldier";

to his Florentine lieutenant Cassio, "he was great of heart"; to Lodovico, he is "the noble Moor . . . whose solid virtue The shot of accident, nor dart of chance, Could neither graze nor pierce", and to Desdemona, he is almost a god, whose visage she saw in his mind. This nobility is the stuff of which tragic heroes are made, and of all Shakespeare's creations none is more heroically tragic than this black African.

But Shakespeare also knew that despite its genuineness personal nobility would not bridge the gulf of colour, culture, and race. Othello is so readily vulnerable, because although he is indispensable to Venice's security and therefore highly honoured, he does not really belong, and he knows this himself.[16] Behind its liberal facade (necessitated at least partly by the Turkish threat), there lurks the other Venice peopled by Brabantios, Roderigos, Iagos and Emilias, who would never accept a Moor as one of them, however good or great he may prove himself. To this Venice, Desdemona's love for Othello is "against all rules of nature"; it could only be conjured by some spells, mixtures or witch-craft. Roderigo is easily persuaded that this love would not last, that although Desdemona be "full of most blest condition", she would still cuckold "the thicklips". Emilia jokingly advises her mistress to do so ("Why, would not you?" IV, iii, 64), and wishes that Desdemona had never seen Othello.

But what about Desdemona? In Shakespeare, love is the only force that may triumph over all psychological barriers, and there is no doubt that Desdemona's love, at least at the beginning, is nearly as impetuous as Juliet's. Unfortunately, it is not love informed by understanding. What Desdemona loves is a romanticised image of Othello created by her girlish imagination out of the tales of his adventures and exploits (I, iii, 128-170). So little she knows the real Othello that even after the Moor had been on the rack for quite some time she confidently tells Emilia that Othello can never be jealous because "the sun where he was born Drew all such humours from him". (III, iv, 26-27). In fact, although she almost worships Othello, not unoften she seems more at ease in the company of her countrymen (e.g. her badinage with Iago on the seaport in Cyprus, II, i, 100-165).[17] Consequently when Othello omniously tells her of the weird powers and associations of the lost handkerchief ("it was dyed in mummy, which the skilful Conserve of maidens' hearts"), the poor Venetian girl can only exclaim in fear and anguish: "Then would to God that I had never seen it!" Her noble lie at the last moment to save Othello is indeed touching; but possibly far more psychologically significant is her pathetic plea a few minutes earlier: "O, banish me, my lord, but kill me not." Although we are in no doubt that the noble Moor would kill himself the moment he discovered his fearsome error, we are somewhat less certain that Desdemona would have acted like Juliet were Othello to die before her.

Iago capitalises on this uncertainty to poison Othello's mind. At their parting from Venice, to Brabantio's vicious warning:

Look to her, Moor, have a quick eye to see:
She has deceived her father, may do thee.

—Othello quickly responds: "My life upon her faith". But could he be really so sure of this faith? The tragedy revolves on this issue, for although Desdemona remains loyal even unto her horrible end, Othello loses faith in her already in III, iii. And what is Iago's chief means to subverting Othello's trust? I suggest that it is his knowledge that deep down in Othello's soul there is a dark and unstated fear that being a Moor he understands neither Venice nor Desdemona.[18] Iago's "horrible conceit", by slow insinuation, brings this out in open.

Iago. I know our country disposition well:
In Venice they do let God see the pranks
They dare not show their husbands: their best conscience
Is not to leave undone, but keep unknown.
Othello. Dost thou say so? (III, iii, 206-209).

The question is as revealing as Desdemona's frightened exclamations "Is't possible?" "I'faith is't true?" (III, iv, 66, 73) when she hears from Othello the history of the magical handkerchief. And so shortly after, when Othello speaks to himself:

Haply, for I am black,
And have not those soft parts of conversation
That chamberers have, or for I am declin'd
Into the vale of years,—yet that's not much—
Sh's gone, I am abus'd.....(III, iii, 267-71)

—we know that Iago has trapped him in his fatal weakness—his distrust of himself in a society where even love cannot win him complete acceptance.

In presenting Othello as his most tragic hero Shakespeare for once showed himself to be magnificently free from the whiteman's colour-prejudice, but one still wonders if even he really fathomed the inner recesses of his creation's mind. The doubt grows when one compares his handling of Othello's character with that of his other tragic heroes of this period, with Hamlet, for example, or Macbeth, or Antony of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Othello is more majestic, monolithic or sculpturesque, but less self-conscious and less intricately drawn. One obscurely feels that he is an outsider not only to Venice, not only to his beloved Desdemona, but possibly even to his own author. His fierce unexpected passions erupt from some deeply buried subterranean racial past which no European, howsoever liberal and enlightened, may hope to reach or see from within. One is intensely moved by his suffering, but did even Shakespeare know what Othello meant when in the bedchamber this dark tormented figure stood watching the snow-white,

alabaster-smooth skin of the sleeping Desdemona and thus spoke to himself:

> It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul,
> Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars . . . .

IV

The Tempest is commonly considered to be Shakespeare's last play, some kind of a personal farewell and testament in which the quintessence of our bard's wisdom has been presented in the form of an allegory. It is true that Dowden's autobiographical interpretation, in its simple form, has long ceased to be respectable; but his view of the plays of the final period (especially *The Tempest*) as embodying Shakespeare's mature serenity and hard-won peace is still widely influential, albeit in more modern and sophisticated versions. One of the most highly esteemed writers on Shakespeare in our time, Wilson Knight, has repeatedly argued that in these last plays Shakespeare gave us "myths of immortality", that *The Tempest* "repeats, in miniature, the separate themes of Shakespeare's greater plays" and "distils the poetic essence of the whole Shakespearian universe", that it is a great symbol of progression from tragedy to the universal harmony of music. Other critics have also maintained that the theme of *The Tempest* is "reconciliation", that it is "an exposition of the themes of Fall and Redemption", that it presents "a heightened, almost symbolic awareness of the beauty of normal humanity after it has been purged of evil—a blessed reality under the evil of appearance." [19]

Now one would readily agree that *The Tempest* is rich in poetry, impressive in its controlled involutions of language, versification, imagery and ideas and in its architectonic skill, but, short of blind idolatry, it is hard to see how Shakespeare achieved in this play ultimate harmony, reconciliation, or redemption. What contraries are reconciled, what evil redeemed, what blessed reality revealed and vindicated? The usual answer is that in the end Prospero fully forgives Alonso and Antonio, treachery, revenge, and conspiracy give way to repentance, humility and compassion, the exile returns home with those who were magically shipwrecked, the slaves are set free, and in the union of Ferdinand and Miranda, love is re-established as the supreme principle of existence, the source of its transcendent harmony. Even a little reflection, however, will show that this neat structure breaks down at many points, the most obvious being where it touches the unloved, unreconciled and unredeemed figure of Caliban, "a salvage and deformed slave".[20]

For, Caliban is Prospero's skeleton in the cupboard just as the people whom he presumably represents have been the skeleton in the cupboard

of modern western civilization. There have been many attempts to take the sting out of his presence by the use of allegorial device; he represents Chaos, Earth, "nature without the benefit of nurture", "brute understanding", the animal in man, *homo ferus*, the "Id", etc. etc.[21] I have nothing, in principle, against symbolic interpretation; but since Malone's discovery of the relation between this play and the socalled Bermuda pamphlets ample evidence has been collected to strengthen the view that at least part of the story of *The Tempest* and the character of Caliban in particular were suggested by contemporary first-hand accounts of the English voyagers and colonists in the New World.[22] A ship-wreck very similar in details to the one described in *The Tempest* did take place in 1609 leading to the discovery of the Bermudas; there are many verbal parallels between Shakespeare's description and those given in Sylvester Jourdain's *Discovery of the Barmudas* (1610) and William Strachey's *True Reportory of the Wrack* (1610); and it has been convincingly proved that Shakespeare was not only familiar with these and other related accounts but knew personally several people connected with the colony of Virginia. Whatever may be the metaphysical significance of Caliban, historically he seems to represent the European colonist's view of the American Indian.[23]

This view, however, was not entirely without ambiguity. On the one hand these strange primitive people appeared to have a rare simplicity uncorrupted by personal possessiveness and cultivated doubletalk which was nostalgically reminiscent of the legendary Golden Age. On the other, they were seen as ugly lawless savages, unsociable and inhuman, perfidious heathens, intractable to the civilizing influences of their divinely appointed conqueror-mentors.[24] Since the Europeans who went to the New World carried with them their ingrained racial-cultural arrogance and exclusiveness, and since their chief motivations were power and gold, the second view naturally prevailed although the other awareness did not completely disappear. Shakespeare's presentation of Caliban shows a touch of this ambivalence, but on the whole his view does not seem to be basically different from that of the colonists, or of the later white settlers towards the Australian aborigines.

The "Names of the Actors" in the First Folio describe Caliban as "a salvage and deformed slave". According to Chambers, the name Caliban is derived from a Romany word "Cauliban", meaning "blackness"; it may also be a "development of the word carib, meaning a savage inhabitant of the New World." (Kermode). He is represented as a monster, "a freckled whelp hagborn", who looks like a fish but is "legg'd like a man and his fins like arms". According to Prospero, he had once tried to violate Miranda. He is stupid, malevolent, uneducable, and was originally languageless; "a mooncalf", "a most poor credulous monster", who gets quickly drunk, and wants "to lick the shoe" of Stephano

whom he believes to be "a brave god. . . .dropp'd from heaven". He instigates his newly chosen master to murder Prospero and take his "nonpareil" daughter to wife. His punishment, therefore, is well-deserved, although it is still punishment, and in no sense, reconciliation.

Caliban is thus a grotesque figure, and would be altogether comic but for his monstrous ugliness and villainy. And yet if we look at him with eyes other than Prospero's or of the white conquerors, the elements of tragedy in the situation become evident. I do not remotely suggest that Shakespeare intended us to look at him that way. I am rather inclined to agree with Clifford Leech that in his last plays, and especially in *The Tempest*, Shakespeare betrays a narrow puritanism which is in violent contrast to the warm humanity of his earlier play.[25] But as I mentioned at the beginning of this essay, a work of art, once completed, may communicate meanings which were outside the conscious intentions of the artist. One thus remembers that when Prospero first arrived on the island its only inhabitant "with a human shape" was Caliban, who was his own king; that :

Caliban : When thou cam'st first,
Thou strok'st me, and made much of me;.....
and then I lov'd thee,
And show'd thee all the qualities o' th' isle.
The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile.....
(I, ii, 334-340)

—that Prospero by his magic power cheated him out of his possessions and reduced him to a slave:

Prospero : We'll visit Caliban my slave . . .,
. . . But, as 'tis
We cannot miss him: he does make our fire,
Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices
That profit us. (I, ii, 310-315)

—that as reward for all his hard labour, Prospero would sty him "In this hard rock, while you do keep from me The rest o' th' island" (an anticipation of what later happened to the native populations in the United States, Australia and South Africa), that his slightest protest is met with punishment which in its sadism would almost match the devices of Hitler and Stalin. Prospero's art, howsoever wonderful it may be, is not nourished by wisdom nor inner peace nor happiness. It is little better than Sycorax's black magic, and its main use is to dominate the elements, and human and non-human beings. Even the airy spirit, Ariel, tends to lose some of his allegorical appeal when one recollects that he is prized by his master primarily for his grateful subservience, and that in a colony such ingratiating loyalty on the part of a member of the enslaved community is rarely considered a virtue (except by the rulers).

None of these considerations, however, would redeem Caliban, certainly not within Shakespeare's framework of *The Tempest*. He is not endowed by his author with the faintest spark of nobility (even his perception of sounds and sweet airs and ethereal voices is placed in a grotesque context); he is the sub-human outsider, "thrice-double ass", born to slavery, whose languageless anguish does not concern us because he is not endowed with a soul. For reasons not known to us, Shakespeare's humanism in *Othello* had undergone a sea-change before he tried to handle for the last time the baffling problem of apartheid. His curiosity and interests were still almost universal, but not his sympathies or understanding. And so the poor aborigine is not only not redeemed or found a place in love's orchestration; he is also denied the slightest suspicion of glory of an almost historically inevitable martyrdom.

References

1. Brecht's play, *Die Massnahme* (1931, Gesammelte Werke, II) is an extreme example. Written ostensibly to justify the disastrous communist strategy in China in 1927, it is, in effect, a moving exposure of communist ruthlessness and *partiinost*.

2. The first official ghetto was established in Venice in 1516 (where previously the segregated quarter of the Jews was called Giudecca): "at that time a considerable part of Venetian export trade and finance was in Jewish hands". See H. Graetz, *History of the Jews*, Vol. IV; W. Sombert, *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*.

3. For contemporary views and discussions, see Montaigne, *Essays*, "Of Cannibals"; Robert Eden, *History of Travaile* (1577); *Purchas his Pilgrimage* (1613) and *Purchas his Pilgrimes* (1625); and of course the Bermuda pamphlets. For studies of the background, Cawley, *The Voyagers and Elizabethan Drama* (1938), and L. B. Wright, *Middle-class Culture in Elizabethan England* (1936).

4. See J. R. Brown, "The Realization of Shylock", *Early Shakespeare*, Stratford-upon Avon Studies, iii (1961).

5. Sol. Now what news on the Rialto?
Sal. Why yet it lives there unchecked, that Antonio hath a ship of rich lading wrack'd on the narrow seas . . . . if my gossip Report be an honest woman of her word.
Sol. I would she were as lying a gossip in that, as ever knapp'd ginger . . . but it is true, without any slips of prolixity, or crossing the plain highway of talk, that the good Antonio, the honest Antonio;—O that I had a title good enough to keep his name company!—
Sal. Come, the full stop.
Sol. Ha! What sayest thou?—Why the end is, he hath lost a ship. (III, i, 1—17).

It is indeed strange that Granville-Barker thinks that Salerio and Solanio "could exchange speeches and no one would be the wiser", and that their

function in the play is "to paint Venice for us, the Venice of the magnificent young man" (*Prefaces IV*, p. 110). There is nothing magnificent about this pair, but their speeches are certainly illuminating, and they are differentiated, though not in detail, Salerio being the more garrulous and offensive of the two.

6. Curiously, most critics have tried to romanticize Bassanio, some half-heartedly, and all of them unconvincingly. After them, Quiller-Couch is very refreshing. "What is Bassanio's project? To borrow three thousand ducats to equip himself to go off and hunt an heiress in Belmont". (*Shakespeare's Workmanship*, p. 100). His comments on Bassanio's soliloquy in the casket scene are even more devastating. He rightly calls these Venetians "empty-hearted".

7. J. Weiss, *Wit, Humour, and Shakespeare*, p. 312. The suspicion is supported not only by the obvious correspondence between the theme of the song and Bassanio's argument but by our knowledge of Portia. She is desperately in love (her very life depends on Bassanio's success), and as we already know from I. ii, she deeply resents her father's strange will. "I may neither choose who I would, nor refuse who I dislike, so is the will of a living daughter curb'd by the will of a dead father". That her "hot temper" is not incapable of leaping "o'er a cold decree" is already indicated when she tells Nerissa to "set a deep glass of Rhennish wine on the contrary casket" that the Duke of Saxony's nephew may not make the correct choice. Like other lovable heroines of Shakespeare's comedies she too is more honest to her feelings than to her verbal commitments or conventional obligations.

8. C. Roth, *A History of the Jews in England* (1941).

9. J. L. Cardozo, *The Contemporary Jew in the Elizabethan Drama* (1925).

10. Queen Elizabeth's London was extremely suspicious of all alien immigrants, especially if they were industrious and successful. There were several anti-alien riots between 1586 and 1595, primarily against the French and Dutch immigrants who had proved to be keen traders or craftsmen. See A. W. Pollard and others, *Shakespeare's Hand in The Play of Sir Thomas More*, and W. Cunningham, *Alien Immigrants to England*. For the same reason the Jew money-lender-merchant was an obvious object of jealousy and hatred. In fact, in the 15/16th centuries, with the rise of the Christian bourgeoisie, Jew-baiting became increasingly conspicuous in Europe. See S. W. Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews* (1937).

11. See, for example, N. Coghill, "The Governing Idea", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, I. 1948. Also E. K. Chambers, *Shakespeare : a Survey*, pp. 112-15.

12. See H. Sinsheimer, *Shylock* (1947) who claims *The Merchant of Venice* to be the "most ingenious satire on justice and courts of law in the literature of the world", p. 139. There is, however, nothing in the play to suggest that Shakespeare's intentions were satirical.

13. I have followed Neilson and Thorndike's chronology (*The Facts about Shakespeare*, Revised Edition, 1961, p. 76). All quotations from Shakespeare in this essay are from the Arden edition of his plays.

14. Coleridge used the words "veritable negro" only to argue that Shakespeare could not have contemplated Othello as being one since "it would be something monstrous to conceive this beautiful Venetian girl falling in love with a veritable negro". (*Lectures on Shakespeare*, p. 386). An argument incredible in its naivete, especially from an otherwise so perspicacious a critic as Coleridge, but not atypical. There, however, are far too many explicit references to Othello's black colour and thick lips to mistake Shakespeare's meaning. As to monstrosity, that is exactly what is stressed in the play. The point is convincingly explained by M. R. Ridley in his Introduction to the Arden Edition, pp. li-liv. It is significant that Lamb who recognized Othello to be "a black", never-

theless thought it necessary to warn that Desdemona's "affection" for him was "a sigularity rather to be wondered at than imitated".

15. The great contribution of the Moors to European civilization is now generally recognized. What is less well-known is that in the 13th/14th centuries, the independent state of Morocco, in the words of Ibn-Batuta, was "an earthly paradise".

16. Few critics appear to notice this. It is, however, not without significance that on both the occasions when Othello's actions call for punishment from Venice, he speaks of his services to that State, certainly not in self-defence, but as a reminder of his instrumental worth. The reminder is necessary because his "noble and approv'd good masters" would be hardly impressed by his descent "from men of royal siege". At the beginning he says: "My services, which I have done the signiory, Shall out-tongue his complaints" (I, ii, 18-19), and at the end : "I have done the state some service, and they know't". (V, ii, 340). He has to stress this, because in Venice what counts is not his being but his usefulness.

17. This particular scene has been the source of much embarassment to Shakespeare's critics and producers. Many pretend like Bradley, not to notice it at all; others like Ridley are pained to admit that "it is unnatural .... Perhaps the passage was just a sop to the groundlings." (Arden Edition, p. 54). Granville-Barker makes a valiant effort to justify both Shakespeare and his heroine. "Shakespeare", he says, "now stimulates suspense by giving no less than a ninety-line stretch of the scene to showing us Desdemona's silent anxiety, which he frames, for emphasis, by contrast, in a bout of artificially comic distraction". (*Prefaces*, IV, pp. 148-49). The trouble with this theory is that Desdemona's anxiety is so silent that but for Granville-Barker we are not likely to suspect its presence, while the comic distraction is not only loud but it receives obvious encouragement from the heroine. Without necessarily sharing Rymer's moral indignation ("Now follows a Jack-pudding farce between Iago and Desdemona . . . The Venetian Donna is hard put to't for pastime!"), one may nonetheless note that this dialogue does put Desdemona's relation with Othello in a new light.

18. Othello's lack of understanding of Venice and its people is evident throughout the play. Brabantio's polite curiosity he mistakes for love ("Her father lov'd me, oft invited me", he says); he is readily persuaded that "Good Michael" might have been Desdemona's lover even while Othello wooing Desdemona : he misunderstands his recall from Cyprus to Venice and is angry (at least Lodovico thinks so); and as to Desdemona, there is an illuminating passage which is not often sufficiently stressed by critics:

Iago : And when she seem'd to shake and fear your looks,
She lov'd them most.

Othello : And so she did. (III, iii, 211-12).

19. See Dowden, *Shakespeare : His Mind and Art*; Wilson Knight, *The Crown of Life* and *The Shakesperian Tempest*; Quiller-Couch, *Shakespeare's Workmanship*; J. Dover Wilson, "The meaning of the Tempest"; Theodore Spencer *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man*; and F. Kermode's Introduction to the Arden edition of *The Tempest* (1962).

20. Another is Antonio. W. H. Auden, in *The Sea and the Mirror, A Commentary on Shakespeare's The Tempest*, stresses this point when he makes Antonio say *sotto voce* :

Your art is partial, Prospero;
My will is all my own :
Your need to love shall never know
Me : I am I, Antonio,
By choice myself alone. (*Collected Poetry*, p. 361).

Auden gives the entire third section of this fascinating work to Caliban (pp. 373-403), who unlike the other characters speaks in prose : but although his Caliban tells us a great deal about the play, its author, and the unhappy audience, his own significance remains rather obscure.

21. See, for example, Schlegel, Lowell, Spencer, Kermode, and recently John Wain, *The Living World of Shakespeare* (1964), p. 228 (where Caliban is interpreted as "the Id").

22. Malone, *Account of the incidents from which the title and part of the story of Sahkespeare's Tempest were derived* (1808). Also see Morton Luce's Introduction to the original Arden edition of *The Tempest* (revised, 1938).

23. See C. M. Gayley, *Shakespeare and the Founders of Liberty in America* (1917); A. W. Ward, "Shakespeare and the Makers of Virginia" (1919); Lee, "Caliban's visits to England", Cornhill, N. S., 1913, pp. 333-45.

24. Typical of the former view is Montaigne's essay, "Of Cannibals". For the latter, and for contemporary ambivalence, see Purchas. For general discussion, see Cawley, *The Voyagers and Elizabethan Drama* (1938).

25. Clifford Leech, *Shakespeare's Tragedies*, Part II, ch. 7, "*The Tempest*". Leech points out that Prospero rages against Caliban as the spirit of the earth, threatens with bonds the spirit of unbridled fancy (represented by Ariel), and stage-manages Miranda's romance. He is a kind of celestial schoolmaster who is pathologically afraid of freedom and the flesh and teaches everyone obedience to his puritanical will.

SHAKESPEARE'S SPLENDID SIMPLETONS

MRINALINI EMMERSON

DR. JOHNSON said of the characters of Shakespeare: "As the personages of Shakespeare act upon principles arising from general passions, very little modified by particular forms, their pleasures and vexations are communicable to all times and to all places; they are natural and therefore durable; the adventitious peculiarities of personal habits are only superficial dyes, bright and pleasing for a little while yet soon fading to a dim tinct, without any remains of former lustre; but the discriminations of true passions are the colour of nature; they pervade the whole mass and can only perish with the body that exhibits them. The accidental composition of heterogenous modes are dissolved by the chance that combined them; but the uniform simplicity of primitive qualities neither admits increase or suffers decay. The sand heaped by one flood is scattered by another but the rock always continues in its place. The stream of time which is continually washing the fabric of other poets, passes without injury by the adamant of Shakespeare".

Of this one feels inclined to say that it would be difficult in real life to meet such brilliant and eccentric people as Sir John Falstaff or Sir Toby Belch, although these two are probably modelled upon actual persons; (both too were "drunken old failures" which, alas, is too common a sight !) but this is only because Shakespeare has invested them with his own unique wit and humour. Viewed in themselves, they are consistent, entirely credible and, of course, immortal. Shakespeare, however, with his all-embracing comprehension of human nature has not confined himself to describing only the brilliant and witty but has given us equally enthralling portraits of simple minded and idiotic (i.e. private) persons. I am not here referring to such famous clowns and wags as Touchstone and Feste nor even to the Fool in *King Lear* but to such characters as Justice Shallow, Slender and Silence, Sir Andrew Ague-cheek, Bottom and his "hempen homespuns", Dogberry and Verges and others slightly less well-known.

Shakespeare has such firm faith in the Life Principle that he has endowed all his characters, even the melancholy and evil ones, with zest and enjoyment.

No one knew better than Shakespeare that Death is "a necessary end" and that "ripeness is all"; but he has shown us over and over again that there is supreme pleasure in life as we go to achieve this ripeness.

Falstaff once described himself as "witty in myself and the cause that wit is in other men" Shakespeare's simpletons are not witty in themselves, but are certainly the cause of wit in other men. This however does not seem to distress them at all, and they enjoy life although they are often made the butt of people cleverer than themselves and are often too the victim of cruel practical jokes.

In *Henry* IV (Part 2 Act 3 Scene 2), there is a conversation between Mr. Justice Shallow and his cousin Silence. Shallow boasts of his past conquests and is encouraged to do so by Silence. Shallow says to Silence : "I dare say my cousin William has become a good scholar. He is at Oxford still, is he not?" Silence says, "Indeed Sir, to my cost". Shallow then says, "'A must then to the inns of Court shortly. I was once of Clement's Inn ; where I think they will talk of mad Shallow yet". Silence says, "You were called 'Lusty Shallow' then cousin". Shallow proudly says, "By the mass, I was called anything and I would have done anything and roundly too". Later on in the same scene Falstaff comes in and Shallow says to him, "O, Sir John, do you remember when we lay all night in the windmill of St. George's field?" To which Falstaff, who has been recruiting men for the forthcoming battle, says, "No more of that, good Master Shallow, no more of that". But Shallow goes on boasting whereupon Falstaff says, "We have heard the chimes at midnight Master Shallow", and Shallow says triumphantly, "That we have, that we have, in faith Sir John, we have. Our watchword was 'Hem boys'; Come lets to dinner. Jesus! the days we have seen! Come, Come". Later when Shallow has gone, Falstaff says, "I do remember him at Clement's Inn, like a man made after supper of a cheese paring."

In Act 5 Scene 3 of *Henry* IV Part 2 Silence too celebrates and sings:

Be merry, be merry, my wife has all;
For women are shrews, both short and tall:
'Tis merry in hall when beards wag all,
And welcome merry Shrove-tide,
Be merry, be merry.

Falstaff says, "I did not think Master Silence had been a man of this mettle". Whereat Silence replies, "Who, I? I have been merry twice and once ere now."

In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Justice Shallow comes in again still boasting of his past exploits. In Act 2 Scene 3, Page says to him, "Master Shallow, you have yourself been a good fighter though now a man of peace". And Shallow complacently replies, "Bodykins, Master Page, though I now be old and of the peace, if I see a sword out, my finger itches to make one. Though we are justices and doctors and churchmen, Master Page, we have some salt of our youth in us ; we are the sons of women, Master Page."

In the same play, Act IV Scene 5, Simple the servant of Slender comes to see Falstaff about Mistress Anne Page, as he says, "to know if it were my master's fortune to have her or no". Falstaff replies, " 'Tis, 'tis his fortune." Simple, taken aback, says, "What, Sir?" Falstaff replies, "To have her, or no. Go; say the woman told me so." Simple: "May I be bold to say so, Sir?" Falstaff: "Ay, Sir Tike, who more bold?" Simple: "I thank your Worship, I shall make my master glad with these tidings."

Slender is later nearly fooled into marrying "a lubberly boy" instead of Mistress Anne Page (Act V Scene 5) but is not too much upset about this mishap, saying that even if he had inadvertently married a boy, he would not have been responsible for his maintenance. Evans says, "Jeshu! Master Slender, cannot you see put marry poys?"

In *Twelfth Night*, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, although the constant butt of Sir Toby Belch, Maria and the other witty characters of the play, still enjoys himself in his own fashion and delights in his powers of dancing and fighting, although he is really a coward and is severely beaten by Sebastian. He is rather depressed at the lack of response of Olivia to his wooing but speedily cheers himself up about it. In Act I Scene 3, when Sir Toby assures him that he has a better chance than the Duke of winning Olivia, he says, "I will stay a month longer, I am a fellow of the strangest mind in the world. I delight in masques and revels sometimes altogether." Sir Toby: "Art thou good at these Kickshawes, Knight?" Sir Andrew: "As any man in Illyria whatsoever he be under the degree of my betters, and yet I will not compare with an old man."

The antics and gambols of Bottom and his artisans in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the pleasure they take in "presenting moonshine and other things before Theseus, are so well known that it seems superfluous to quote from this play.

In *Much Ado about Nothing*, Dogberry and Verges, especially the former, are perennial figures of fun and they have fun too in their own ponderous way. Dogberry is very conscious of his superiority to Verges. He is also (and so is Verges) very faithful to his office of apprehending villians, although he lets them go, if they will not stand, when he challenges them, and is glad to be rid of their roguery. Dogberry's malapropisms are also excellent. In Act 3 Scene 5 of the play, we have the following conversation:

Dogberry: Go, good partner, go, get you to Francis Seacoal; bid him bring his pen and inkhorn to the gaol; we are now to examination these men.

Verges: And we must do it wisely.

Dogberry: We will spare for no wit, I warrant you; here's that shall drive some of them to a non-come; only get the learned writer to set down our excommunication, and meet me at the gaol.

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Goodman Dull in *Love's Labour's Lost* finds himself quite mystified when in the company of Moth and Holofernes and Amado, and in Act 5 Scene 1, we have this delightful conversation which shows that Dull loves music and dancing as do so many of the other simpletons.

Holofernes : *Via* goodman Dull! Thou hast spoken no word all this while.

Dull : Nor understood none neither, Sir.

Holofernes: *Allons*! we will employ thee.

Dull: I'll make one in a dance, or so; or I will play the tabor to the Worthies, and let them dance the hay.

Holofernes: Most dull, honest Dull, to our sport, away!

The conversation between Launce and Speed in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act 3, Scene 1, when Speed comes in as Launce is reading a letter, is typical.

Speed: How now, Signior Launce! what news with your mastership?

Launce: With my master's ship? Why, it is at sea.

Speed: Well, your old vice still; mistake the word.
What news, then, in your paper?

Launce: The blackest news that ever thou heardest.

Speed: Why, man, how black?

Launce: Why, as black as ink.

Speed: Let me read them.

Launce: Fie on thee, jolthead! thou canst not read.

Speed: Thou lies; I can.

Eventually Launce allows Speed to look at the letter which lists the accomplishments of a girl. Speed reads "Item, she can sew," to which Launce replies, "That is as much as to say: Can she so?"

In *The Comedy of Errors*, the two Dromios are not very exciting. There is one rather amusing conversation between Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse in Act 3 Scene 2 where a geography lesson is illustrated by reference to the different parts of a woman's body.

One can quote endless instances like these from the numerous simpletons dotted all over Shakespeare's plays. Even in some of the tragedies we find these engaging characters, as for example in *Romeo and Juliet* Act 1 Scene 1, which describes a quarrel between the serving men of the rival houses of Montagu and Capulet. In *Julius Caesar*, Act 1 Scene 1, the cobbler is most amusing.

It will be noticed that Shakespeare did not depict stupid women as often as he did stupid men. He preferred his heroines and his other female characters to be witty and amusing. Of the simpletons among women, the only names which spring to the mind immediately are Mistress Quickly (*Henry IV* and the *Merry Wives of Windsor*) Doll Tearsheet (*Henry IV*) and Audrey (*As you like it*). The nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* is too shrewd to be called a simpleton. Desdemona in *Othello*

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and Ophelia in *Hamlet* are guileless but not simple minded, and the same can be said of Miranda in *The Tempest*.

Hazlitt said, "With Ben Jonson we find ourselves generally in low company and see no hope of getting out of it." With Shakespeare, we frequently find ourselves in low company, but can easily get out of it as Shakespeare himself has provided the outlets. Ben Jonson was bound too rigidly by his own conception of comedy and his inexorable determination not to mix comedy with tragedy. Shakespeare was hampered by no such restrictions.

In all Shakespeare's works, in his poems, his plays and his sonnets, there is pulsating and vibrant life. Shakespeare does not talk much of the hereafter. He says "Whats to come is still unsure".

Macbeth was prepared to "Jump the life to come" for the material benefits of this world. All he dreaded were shame and punishment in this life. Hamlet said it was probably better to endure the ills we are acquainted with "than fly to others that we know not of". Claudio in *Measure for Measure*. is terrified of having "to die and go we know not where". Shakespeare glorifies living and insists on the joy there is in it, even for the least and most stupid of his creations. As M. M. Reese says in *Shakespeare, his World and his Work*, "His message is of life and the power that lies in all of us to sweeten its corrupted currents, before the bright day is done and we are for the dark".

STUDIES IN *MACBETH*

SRI C. SEN

HISTORICAL criticism has done much to bring back for our benefit a true picture of past times, enabling us to see a great dramatist like Shakespeare in a correct perspective but it has a limitation to which attention may be drawn by way of warning. Without some such precaution one may perhaps tend to see Shakespeare too much as a product of his age and miss the transcendence. Jonson's tribute, "He was not of an age, but for all time!", is a reminder, the earliest in time, that the universality attributed makes it unwise to associate him too intimately with a particular period of history. His plays by no means hold the mirror up to Tudor life and manners. They are perhaps more remarkable for their difference from these than accord. The transcendence is effected in Shakespeare by his continual transformation of his material into the symbolical. Sometimes we shall examine the material in vain to discover the elements of greatness which Shakespeare imparts. This, however, lies in genius whose mystery is not yet unveiled. We collect enormous amounts of historical data, study old documents and unearth forgotten beliefs and practices yet the light from these never achieve an effect of final illumination. Perhaps the most profitable line of research has been in the field of semantics. By this enquiry we have an assurance that we have the necessary equipment to understand what Shakespeare says.

The editor of *The London Shakespeare* (Vol. VI, pp. 1091-92) summarizes in less than half a dozen sentences the results obtained by researches on the subject of the Witches in *Macbeth*. That Shakespeare used known material is obvious but what he wrought out of it is an independent creation and not fully explicable in terms of any practice or belief: "The Witches are meant to be mysterious. They are the more horrible", says Miss Bradbrook, because we do not know what they are. They have been likened to the Classical Fates, the Eumenides, the Valkyries and Norns, the wizardesses of Irish legend, *les soeurs fatidiques*, the agents of Nemesis. No doubt, as Dr. W. C. Curry has well demonstrated, they owed their famous gifts to the demonology and multifarious superstitions of long ages. We can form some notion about the powers of the Witches, their activities, and the contemporary attitude towards them from Robert Burton, who was about a dozen years

younger than Shakespeare. We will quote from his "A Digression of the Nature of Spirits, Bad Angels, or Devils, and How they cause Malancholy", which forms a section of his *Anatomy of Melancholy*. Burton lists nine kinds of "bad Spirits", his authority for the statement being "our Schoolmen & other Divines". In the second rank of the classification are placed "Liars, and Equivocators", and in the fifth "cozeners, such as belong to Magicians and Witches", and in the ninth "are those tempters in several kinds". Magicians like Simon Magus, he declared, possessed the power to "reveal secrets, future events, tell what is done in far countries, make them appear that died long since, etc." Speaking of the Powers of the Air, Burton writes, "The air is not so full of flies in summer, as it is at all times of invisible devils".

Shakespeare's Weird Sisters are an amalgam of all these attributes, and incorporate besides other qualities, strongly individualizing them. In the last analysis they belong to the world of imagination. The supernatural as Burton says, was far from merely a popular superstition: "*Nero* and *Heliogabalus Maxentius* and *Julianus Apostata*, were never so much addicted to Magick of old, as some of our modern Princes and Popes themselves are nowadays".

The Witches prophesy to both Macbeth and Banquo. Their words do not, however, call forth the same response in the two men. The former is profoundly stirred by ambition because of a part-fulfilment of the prophecy, and aided by opportunity, achieves kingship through regicide. Yet the fulfilment which follows in a few minutes does not give evidence of prophetic powers in any convincing manner. One in touch with the affairs of the Court could tell as much without pretension to supernatural powers. Banquo lacked opportunity for the realization of his ambition. The prophecy did not fail to disturb him in some measure but circumstances did not favour him. Hence he preferred to stay honest and allow events to take their course.

II

What Lady Macbeth says about her husband comes from an intimate knowledge of his character and well deserves attention :

> Thou wouldst be great;
> Art not without ambition, but without
> The illness should attend it. What thou wouldst highly,
> Thou wouldst holily. (I. v. 17-19)

Iago's case provides a parallel. He is always addressed as *honest* Iago by Othello, who had no doubt ample opportunity to assess his character. The distinction the expression implies is reliability. This would explain why he was chosen to accompany Desdemona to Cyprus. But about Iago's past life little information is available. Part of what we know

we have to infer from what is said in the play itself. We can, for example, deduce that he had had no academic education, being taught in the school of life. Only one direct information is supplied, namely that he suspected his wife of an intrigue with Othello. This is important, showing as it does a susceptibility to jealousy. Perhaps the impulse can explain his whole behaviour, though not with Emilia as its centre and cause of operation. We may enquire, what made Iago cease to be *honest*. Later, we shall ask, what accounts for Macbeth's decline from honour and allegiance ?

Iago was on intimate terms with Othello. So much so that the latter sought for his advice in adjusting his future conduct towards Desdemona. Special reasons may be given to explain this, the most important being that Iago having allegedly detected and exposed a wrong done to the Moor, the latter would naturally turn to him for advice. But considering their official position, such behaviour would hardly be normal without the assumption of a previous habit of dependence upon him. After the marriage with Desdemona, Iago was not too jubilant to notice that "our general's wife is now the general." (II. iii. 305-306). He could anticipate that his influence upon the great man had virtually ended, and that by planning the ruin of Desdemona he could recover his position and lead the general by the nose as asses are. Iago had pondered over the explanation for his behaviour. At first he thought his supersession by Cassio had provoked his spirit of revenge. But not having an academic background, he could scarcely expect to be second in authority to the general. He also mentioned an intrigue between Othello and his wife. What he never mentioned was his resentment at the prospect of losing Othello's ear through an anticipated influence his wife was bound to exercise. His honesty seems thus to have ceased with his jealousy for Desdemona, whom Cassio had also referred to as "our Captain's Captain".

Macbeth, as Lady Macbeth says in her first soliloquy, is "not without ambition" but until the time the play begins, he had not apparently deviated from the path of integrity in its pursuit. Perhaps one may assume without being proved wrong that in the past no great temptation came to him. The Witches fanned ambition into a living flame within him. The partial fulfilment of the prophecy which followed immediately and the royal visit to the Castle showed that his dream could be realized. There was some internal conflict but the voice of conscience was stifled by the impetuosity of Lady Macbeth. In the case of Iago there was no external agent, natural or supernatural to aid and abet him. He trusted to mother wit of which he had an abundant supply to wreak the lives of the Moor and his wife. In this ruthless design the controlling motive was revenge and not ambition. In the last scene when his wickedness lay exposed, he declined to offer expla-

nation. For the jealousy which turned him into a fiend in human form required a kind of confession which no man could make, far less a professional soldier.

The Witches are the direct cause of Macbeth's downfall. And their importance is well suggested by their exclusive introduction in the opening scene and the foreboding comments they make. They appoint a time "ere the set of sun" when the battle is to be over for meeting Macbeth "upon the heath". The verses they speak before leaving sound ominous:

Fair is foul, and foul is fair,
Hover through the fog and filthy air. (I. i. 12-13)

The first line speaks of a change from good to evil from what seems to be a human angle and therefore not well-suited to the rôle. The second Witch (IV. i. 45) evidently speaks under the same feeling in announcing the approach of Macbeth, now a regicide :

Something wicked this way comes.

Milton's Satan says, "Evil, be thou my good". He knew the distinction between the two. Until the date he was a rebel, fallen from grace but not yet an enemy of Man. That came later when he made his choice and vowed to wage endless war on God. But the Witches were the instruments of darkness and how could they know of the transition from the one to the other except as something to exult in ? The words so far as they are prophetical are appropriate in their mouths but not as an estimate of the loss of values, which also they seem to imply. The word "filthy" has been glossed by the O. E. D. as "murky", "thick". Onions also accepts the meaning but in "filthy hags" (IV. i. 115) this sense is not obviously present. If the word is taken to denote some kind of moral disapproval in both the examples, we shall see in Macbeth's use not only an echo but a condemnation as well. For the Witches in discriminating between fair and foul have stepped out of their proper sphere and the word is now hurled back at them, though without conscious knowledge because being what they are, they have no business either to allege the wickedness of Macbeth or to announce the change from fair to foul.

A part of III. vi has been held to be apocryphal. It opens with a long complaining speech from Hecate. The Head of the Sisterhood feels herself left out in the transactions with Macbeth. Her complaint is that the Witches have done nothing to "show the glory of our art", and what they have done has been "for a wayward son/ Spiteful and wrathful". This is petulance, pure and simple, for they have bagged a very big game in Macbeth, which should have pleased the Queen. The following verses, which belong to the same scene, may easily be Shakespeare's. For what is said is integral to the action :

He shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear
His hopes, 'bove wisdom, grace and fear :

And you all know security
Is mortal's chiefest enemy. (30-33).

Macbeth is assured that no one born of a woman should hold any terror for him nor should harm come to him till Birnam wood comes to Dunsinane. These are said to create a sense of security. IV, i, where Macbeth meets the Witches in a cavern with a boiling cauldron in the middle, reveals the future to him in reassuring words. But the sight of Banquo's descendants with crowned heads stretching to the crack of doom, causes him great misery. The Witches after a dance disappear. Macbeth had still more questions to ask but for the time being there were some certainties to comfort him. It was only towards the end that he realizes his betrayal :

And be these juggling fiends no more believed,
That palter with us in a double sense,
That keep the word of promise to our ear,
And break it to our hope. (V. ix. 19-21)

As Othello is driven to mad jealousy by Iago so is Macbeth driven to mad ambition by the Witches. Both retain their great imaginative powers to the end. Jealousy leading to murder is hardly less culpable than ambition leading to regicide. Yet Othello recovers our esteem in the scene where he dies by his hand, and Macbeth does so too, although perhaps to a more limited extent, by his realization of the meaninglessness of all existence. Life, divorced from virtue, becomes a burden he can scarcely support.

III

Macbeth's obvious agitation when the Witches "all-hail" him as "King hereafter" is commented upon by Banquo. The prophecy exposed a lurking ambition, and for a moment he was off his guard. Before he could rally to say anything by way of explanation, came the greeting to Banquo with a significant change in its form to a simple "Hail!" Macbeth wanted to know how authentic was the source of their information when they melted into the wind as if they were no more substantial than breath. Banquo later warned him not to trust them lest they should "enkindle you unto the crown", and the comments he made were afterwards proved entirely just. But Macbeth was in no mood to hear advice, for his hopes were mounting "'bove wisdom, grace and fear". In his imagination he was already a murderer : "nothing is/But what is not". The real world is blotted out, in its place was this fantasy of murder, and for him "horrible imaginings" seem to have a greater reality than the actual moment and its terrors.

Then he meets the king who warmly welcomes him, assuring him that he will grow like a plant under his fostering care. Duncan had no

suspicion that the new Thane of Cawdor would prove a worse traitor than the one just put to death. But what he said covered all cases of betrayal and showed that a mistake made once through misplaced confidence is likely to be made again :

There's no art
To find the mind's construction in the face.
He was a gentleman in whom I built
An absolute trust. (I. iv. 12-14)

The king named his son Malcolm the Prince of Cumberland, nominating him as his successor. This evoked Macbeth's aside to the stars. Let them hide their fires so that his "black and deep desires" may not be seen by their light. Murder is changed from a terrifying fantasy to a programme of action. The stars he apostrophizes represent the heavenly powers, whose judgement he seems to fear.

In the letter to Lady Macbeth he reports the Witches' prophecy: "these Weird Sisters saluted me, and referred me to the coming of the time, with "Hail, King that shall be" (I. v. 7-8). This is, however, modified from the actual words, "All hail, Macbeth that shall be King hereafter" (I. iii. 50) yet in meeting Macbeth on arrival at the Castle, she greets her husband, using the words of the prophecy :

Great Glamis ! worthy Cawdor
Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter !
(I. v. 53-54)

Slight as the difference is from the letter on which she bases her welcome, its closeness to the words actually spoken by the Witches may imply that she is one with them, a kind of covert identification with the instruments of darkness. For goaded to ambition by the Witches, Macbeth would not have roused himself unless his wife indicated the *modus operandi* and urged him on with mad, passionate images of what she herself would have done if she had been oath-bound like him :

I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the baby that milks me.
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have plucked my nipple from its boneless gums,
And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn
As you have done to this. (I. vii. 56-60)

Was Macbeth sworn to the business? Did he break the enterprise to her.? The play contains no answer. But we may easily believe that this passionate stream of reproach did not lack a factual basis in her husband's conduct. They must have speculated about the future and perhaps the picture that emerged was not altogether innocent. In this mediaeval world one had to wade through slaughter to a throne. Macbeth in not defending himself against the charges supports the assump-

tion that they were valid. Their partnership in ambition was so complete that they did not seem to differ in any respect, neither about means nor about ends.

Macbeth in his great soliloquy (I. vii. 1-29) reflects upon the moral and the material aspects of the murder, and also the worth, official and personal, of the King he is to slay. If the act led to no consequences, and meant no more than itself, then the sooner it was done with the better. He did not mind risking the life to come provided all was safe for him in this world. But one who uses the sword perishes by the sword in the just dispensation of God. Towards the King he had a twofold duty. Related to him as kinsman and subject, his present rôle was that of a host. How could he undertake the murder when his duty in both capacities was to protect him from harm? Duncan, again, had irreproachable virtues as man and ruler. The sense of pity at his murder would overwhelm everyone with sorrow. He concluded that his ambition lacked an impelling power.

Now Lady Macbeth's words fell upon him like a flood of molten lava. They supplied the impelling power he could not summon himself. She revived forgotten memories of what he had said to him and she to him. Her vehemence carried him off his feet. She pointed out the way to "trammel up the consequence" by fastening the guilt upon the chamberlains. Macbeth was amazed and felt boundless admiration for this resourceful and courageous woman :

> Bring forth men-children only,
> For thy undaunted mettle should compose
> Nothing but males. (I. vii. 73-74)

In Act II. sc. i, Banquo prays to the merciful powers to "Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature/Gives way to in repose". He is infected but still resisting. As he looks at the starless sky with his son by his side, he complains that though he is heavy with sleep he is yet unable to sleep. He meets Macbeth and they both talk about the prophecy on which Macbeth likes a frank discussion, likely to be of benefit to Banquo, who accepts the invitation with the suspicious comment that whatever transpires he is not prepared to sacrifice honour.

Of Banquo there is no scope to speak much. His murder, which follows, is an incident in Macbeth's life, serving to denigrate him still further, and the appearance of Banquo's ghost exposes the tyrant and his methods, aiding the opposition to mobilize its forces against him. Lennox's ironical comments to "another Lord" (III. vi) throw light on the reaction to Macbeth's regime.

But Duncan's murder is yet to take place. Leaving Banquo, he orders a drink and as he waits for the bell to call him for the purpose, he has a vision of a dagger, which he takes at first as a sign that he should go and complete the job. The dagger seemed solid enough yet was

without material reality. He then understood that it was no more than a projection from his heat-oppressed brain, informed by the "bloody business" he was to undertake. Nature at the moment was perfectly still. In this depth of night the Witches made offerings to Hecate, wicked dreams disturbed the sleepers in their beds, the wolves howled the time of the night, while he like another Tarquin addressed his steps to the object of his outrage. He was frightened lest the stones under his feet should prate and betray his crime. Wicked dreams, witchcraft, Hecate, the Wolves and Tarquin are raised as associations in his mind for the murder he is going to commit. His ambition was a wicked dream, it was brought to birth by Hecate and the Witches, and now as he goes forward, the time of the night is announced by the howls of the wolf, which do duty as a clock for him and his stealthy steps remind him of Tarquin's infamous act. Random as the images appear, they can form a connected series. This associated structure of imagery is a product of a habit of introspection. Macbeth has deeply thought about the projected crime and has seen clearly how he came to be involved in it. The dagger-vision, again, reveals the awful transformation of how an instrument valiantly used for the King's defence becomes a means for the practice of treason and regicide. A man given to visions has perhaps a considerable imaginative power but at the same time he lacks a strength of Will. As Macbeth put it himself, he has no spur to prick the sides of his intent. The Witches and Lady Macbeth sustain his languishing will because crime seems to disintegrate his whole personality. A man like Macbeth does not normally become a criminal. Until Banquo's murder he seemed to have a conscience of some sort; it worked through visions and an imaginative grasp of the moral order violated. But later he became a hardened criminal. What once horrified him was an outraged conscience but in the Fifth Act there was no trace left of it :

> I have supped full of horrors :
> Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,
> Cannot once start me. (V. vi. 12-14)

But this is anticipating things.

Macbeth murders the King. Before doing this, he had observed that "o'er the one half-world/Nature seems dead" (II. i. 49-50). On return from the King's chamber, he asked if Lady Macbeth had heard a noise. Yes, she had, the owl screeching and the crickets crying. What Macbeth heard was different. One of the chamberlains had cried 'murder' in his sleep, waking each other and then they went to sleep after saying prayers and adding an 'amen'. But choked with a guilty conscience Macbeth could not say 'amen' as they had done. Then a voice seemed to cry, condemning him to eternal sleeplessness. He had destroyed God's peace on earth and would therefore be bereft of peace for

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ever, the King being the image of God, his murder is a repetition of Judas's crime. Lady Macbeth at the Banquet Scene referred to her husband's ailment, proving that the curse on the night of the regicide was no mere illusion of a terror-stricken brain : "You lack the season of all nature, sleep" (II. iv. 141). Macbeth had looked at his blood-stained hand, remarking, "This is a sorry sight" (II. ii. 20). Forty lines later he is appalled to look at it again. Not all great Neptune's ocean will wash the blood clean from his hand. He was thinking in terms of the guilt whose stain nothing would remove. Its all-contaminating power is so vast that no limits could be set to it. Lady Macbeth's comment has dramatic irony, an element which is seen again at Banquo's murder :

A little water clears us of this deed
How easy is it then. (II. iii. 67-68)

The practical value of the suggestion is undeniable. While the husband concerned himself with the timeless aspect of the crime, there was need to remind that they lived in the dimension of time. Lady Macbeth in pointing this out was not necessarily proving herself unimaginative. Where would Macbeth be if he had to appear with blood in his hands before the sons of the murdered King who woke up the establishment almost immediately after ?

Macduff is let in by the Porter after knocking at the gate a good while. The half-drunk Porter, opening the gate, freely expressed his profane thoughts. It is a soliloquy in which he imagines himself as playing his rôlein Hell, having to deal with a different order of clients. Suffering from a hang-over as an effect of the previous night's drunkenness, he was full of a sense of what it induces, lechery, red nose, and sleep, so that on meeting Macduff he cannot desist from making an elaborate reference to his thought. What he says in the soliloquy reflects upon his own mental preoccupation, gaining an additional energy of meaning by an accidental coincidence with what happened overnight in the Castle, the hell which Macbeth made through murdering the King. As an example of soliloquy it stands in a class by itself in its combination of horror and comedy.

Macduff is the first to announce the murder ; for him and for everyone else it is "The great doom's image" (II. iii. 71). The eschatological figure employed explains Macbeth's image of "great Neptune's Ocean" as no mere magnifying of a crime through terror and excitement. Lady Macbeth's words in the sleep-walking scene : "Here's the smell of the blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand" (V. i. 44-45) also hark back to the same overwhelming feeling.

Macbeth's reaction may appear a little unexpected but we cannot indict him of hypocrisy when he says, "Had I died an hour before this

chance,/ I had lived a blessed time" (II. iii. 84-85). He seems to be voicing a very real sentiment, which in the last Act is repeated more desolatingly, "I 'gin to be weary of the sun" (V. vi. 49). His experience seems to be discovery of the truth of Christ's saying : "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ?" (Mark 8. 36). His embitterment is a mode of recovering the audience's sympathy and this, notwithstanding the murders he had committed. Banquo's murder is contrived with vile treachery. Macbeth wants security in the tenure of office. He cannot enjoy his kingship because he fears Banquo as a rival. Has he polluted his soul for Banquo's issue, who according to the prophecy, will form a line of kings after him ? He will not allow this to happen. Rather he will challenge fate itself : "Come, fate, into the list" (III. i. 70). Thus Macbeth throws himself into an orgy of murders, Banquo, Macduff's wife, children and servants. On the eve of Banquo's murder, his speech to Lady Macbeth has strong elements of an ambivalent feeling between desire and abhorrence which expressions like the following illustrate : "seeling night" scarfing the tender eye of pitiful day, the thickening light with the crows making wing to the rooky wood. "Good things of the day begin to droop and drowse,/ While night's black agents to their preys do rouse" (III. ii. 52-53).

The Banquet Scene in Act III, sc. iv, has fine lines, and indeed, nothing coming from Shakespeare can be wholly without elements of great poetry but it is on the whole melodrama. It has, however, a definite function, namely, to provide fresh grounds to his enemies to consolidate their position. The element of melodrama, if we are to believe T. S. Eliot, is not necessarily a weakness : "the frontier of drama and melodrama is vague ; the difference is largely a matter of emphasis ; perhaps no drama has ever been greatly and permanently successful without a large melodramatic element". ("Wilkie Collins and Dickens", *Selected Essays*, p. 429).

In the Fifth Act, Macbeth has to face open battle. There is also the death of Lady Macbeth, being the occasion for the expression of a sense of life's emptiness in memorable and oft-quoted verses. He realizes his failures, the absence of honour, love, obedience and of willing friends. He is in the autumn of his life, the time of "the sere, the yellow leaf". In Lady Macbeth's malady he takes only a distinct interest. The husband and wife have travelled apart, each to his or her individual doom. At her death he notices the inevitability of the event which would have perhaps better suited some other time. But to futurity a creeping progress is made through a desiccating futility, which is how he looks at life, and we can see that he is a completely broken man. But when the army marches on Dunsinane and the forest with it, he realizes "th' equivocation of the fiend/ That lies like truth". His death at the hands

of Macduff is an act of poetic justice. Macbeth knows before the end comes that Macduff's was a case of Caesarian birth and therefore he was in the equivocal language of the Witches "not born of a woman". That the Witches had deluded him on every point was the knowledge with which he embraced his death. But his death though waited for as a just punishment for a career of wickedness, is not hailed with joy by the audience because he does not completely forfeit sympathy. He recovers it by his growing dissatisfaction with his life. We see that this dissatisfaction arises from a lack of certain spiritual conditions, which he regards as essential to life's fullness and worth. This realization comes too late but that it comes at all is a proof that crime was not his element. He was like Othello in the grip of a malicious power. In the earlier play the agent was human, in the later the supernatural is aided by the human. Macbeth was no doubt ambitious but what would have possibly lain dormant is dragged out into the daylight by a combination of influences and circumstances which he was helpless to resist. He is to be compared with Othello with far better reason than with Iago. For he was much more a victim than a conscious agent.

Some comments on Macbeth made by Auden seem to show an unexpected failure of the critical intelligence. I will quote his words and some relevant verses of D. H. Lawrence to which they refer : "But let a journalist tell the story of Macbeth or Phedra and we shall immediately recognize them for what they are, one a police court case, the other a pathological case. The poetry that Shakespeare and Racine have given them is not an outward expression of their noble natures, but a gorgeous robe which hide their nakedness. D. H. Lawrence's poem seem to me not altogether unjust.

> And Macbeth and his Lady, who should have been choring,
> Such suburban ambition, so messily goring
> Old Duncan with daggers !
> How boring, how small Shakespeare's people are !
> Yet the language so lovely ! like the dyes from gas-tar".
>
> (W. H. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand*, 176-177).

If the journalist can give better summaries of Sophocles than of Shakespeare, the cause may be that Shakespeare cannot be translated into an ordinary prose statement. Lamb's summaries however prove that the appeal survives a change of medium. The criticism is, therefore, capricious. Noble natures are an excellent theme for art but human nature at all levels may engage the artist's imagination without any necessary diminution of its strength. Macbeth's poetry is related to his character, to his deepest self. When we read it, we do not feel that it is put into the mouth of a "small" man. Macbeth always seems to belong to an exceptional class, which provide us with tragic heroes,

and cannot be confused with an ordinary criminal. His tragedy seems to lie in an "uncriminal" nature being driven to crime.

IV

Lady Macbeth appears for the first time in Act I, Scene v. The previous scenes cover about 300 lines of verses. For a character of her importance this seems a delayed appearance to make but apparently the moment had to be prepared for so that her first impact could be made as revealing as possible. Lady Macbeth is seen reading her husband's letter containing an account of the prophecy by the Witches and its partial fulfilment. Macbeth significantly addresses her as "my dearest partner of greatness", and in doing so, he evidently means more than his elevation to the thaneship of Cawdor and Glamis. There is clearly a glance at the Kingship, and knowing his nature, Lady Macbeth sees no likelihood that he will catch "the nearest way" to it because he is "too full of th' milk of human kindness". It seems that the idea of the murder has already occurred to her as it has to her husband. The two react in the same manner to the prophecy and reveal the danger of being "enkindled to the crown" against which Banquo had warned : "th' milk of human kindness" in Macbeth's character, which she considers a stumbling block to the goal, seems a very unlikely element to distinguish her husband's attitude. More discriminating is her reference to his acting "holily" if he acts at all from ambition. The first quality may characterize his affection for his wife and her constant forethought for her welfare. In speaking on this point, she generalizes on the basis of an experience which has an entirely specialized nature, incapable of extension to other people. The word 'holily' has a religious association and its application to Macbeth seems justified. His struggle with conscience and his preoccupation with the problem of sin and punishment seem to confirm the estimate. The next comment that 'fear' withholds him from what otherwise he is eager enough to enjoy seems also a just remark. But 'fear' should be understood as more metaphysical than physical. As a seasoned warrior he does not lack courage. As he says himself with reference to Banquo's ghost :

> What man dare, I dare
> Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear.
> The armed rhinoceros or th' Hyrcan tiger.

She will pour her spirits in his ear and chastise him with the valour of her tongue. The impediments to the goal will thus melt away. To this programme she adheres with complete success. The Messenger arrives unexpectedly to announce the King's visit to the Castle at

Inverness. His voice sounds hoarse like the raven's in Lady Macbeth's ears; he seems more like one bringing the news of death than of the royal visit. Lady Macbeth's invocation to the wicked spirits for assistance is on the imaginative level as near as anything we see in her husband's speech and soliloquy. It shows that although greatly exhilarated by the prospect, she like her husband is shaken by the thought of the crime. She wants the agents of evil to give her strength and resolution for the act. Her words,

> Come, thick night,
> And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell
> That my knife sees not the wound it makes
> Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
> To cry 'Hold, hold'. (I. v. 48-52)

seems to have a strong family likeness to those of Macbeth, alluding to Banquo's murder:

> Come, seeling night
> Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day,
> And with thy bloody and invisble hand
> Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond
> Which keeps me pale. (III. ii. 46-50)

She not only inflames her husband's ambition but tells him how he should preserve secrecy. His face is too much like an open book where anyone can read his thoughts. Let him wear a mask instead, concealing the cruellest designs under a look of innocence and she volunteers to take charge of "This night's great business". Duncan is welcomed to the Castle and he is pleased with Lady Macbeth's care and attention, which he recognizes by his praise and liberal gifts. Lady Macbeth finds a new difficulty in a last-minute reluctance on her husband's part. Did he not esteem kingship as the "ornament of life" and is he now giving up from cowardice? Why did he break the enterprise to her? Now that the situation is altogether favourable, he is trying to back out. Was she as sworn as he, she would have pulled the sucking baby from her breast and dashed out its brains. This is a specimen of chastising with the valour of the tongue which Macbeth could not withstand. So the project goes forward. The chamberlains are made drunk, and she too has a stiff dose, which gives her courage and strength. Finally, Duncan reminds her of her father and she cannot take his life. The 'thick night' and 'the dunnest smoke of hell' she evoked did not serve to change her feminine nature. Her hysterical words do not give any access to her true feeling. All her violent and fierce sentiments seem improvised to persuade her husband. Herself she is incapable of any cruel act except at the end against her own life.

Her soliloquy immediately preceding the murder, contains a couple of verses which reveal her power of shaping images out of an imme-

diate sensuous experience, which for the pity and terror they rouse have few parallels :

It was the owl that shrieked, the fatal bellman,
Which gives the stern'st good night. (II. ii. 3-4)

After the perpetration of the murder, Macbeth had a frenzy of terrified apprehensions. Religion, outraged conscience and the moral sense, all spoke to him with a thousand voices. Lady Macbeth said wisely, if the deed was allowed to engross the mind in this fashion, it would make them mad,

Go, get some water
And wash the filthy witness from your hand. (II. ii. 46-47).

Macbeth had brought the daggers, dripping with blood, with him. She asked him to put them back in the King's chamber. Macbeth refused to go himself. His plea was that he dared not look on what he had done. She spoke strong words, criticising his childish terrors :

Infirm of purpose!
Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead
Are but pictures. (II. ii. 53-55)

She hastened to do the job herself. While Macbeth looked on his hands, red with the blood he had shed, wildly speculating if all the waters of the seas could wash them clean again because it was the blood of the King, representing God on earth, Lady Macbeth returned to report the success of her mission. She reproached her husband :

My hands are of your colour, but I shame
To wear a heart so white. (II. ii. 64-65)

Macbeth is alarmed at the knocking but he does not know whence it comes. Lady Macbeth knows, it is a knocking at the south entry, and assures him that "a little water clears us of the deed". So it does so far as the criminal allegation is concerned. But in a deeper sense the sin remains and corrodes the soul. Lady Macbeth in taking the simple view is not proving herself devoid of a sense of the corruption. That sense invaded her soul and made her mad. The feeling was driven underground because she forcibly turned her face away from it and we see its operation in the sleep-walking scene. In the face of her raving husband, she had to maintain a facade of good sense. It cost her an immense energy but she did it because there was no one else to do it. But from this the inference that she lacked imagination could never follow. In the sleep-walking scene there is further testimony to her great imagination. Without it her unconscious self could not coin such wonderful phrases : "All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand". (V. ii. 44-45). The husband and wife were complementary to each other. They had both great imagination. Macbeth's soared to the stars, its magnitude comprehended the universe. Lady Macbeth's moved among the experience of life, and its delicacy and charm gave it its distinction.

In depth and profundity, it was not inferior to Macbeth's although the latter surpassed her in a certain metaphysical quality, which could easily be the product of a greater concern with religious matters.

After the King's murder her active rôle comes to an end. She learns something about the contemplated murder of Banquo and at the Banquet Scene, her strength revives for a moment because her offices were needed for her husband's assistance. But she has been sinking all the time into a languor. Her withdrawal from her husband's society indicates an emotional breakdown and no decline in warmth on Macbeth's part. The doctor who examines her and hears her words in the sleep-walking scene tells the Gentlewoman attending on her :

> More she needs the divine than the physician. (V. ii. 66)

and adds immediately after: God, God forgive us all!
With our burden of sin to carry we have no right to sit in judgement over others. All that we can do when startled by evidence of a grave crime is to pray to God for forgiveness. The idea, essentially Christian, seems to be recommended by Shakespeare as the basis of an attitude one should cultivate.

V

The storm is first descibed with his usual volubility by Lennox a few moments before the alarm was raised over Duncan's murder. It raged with extraordinary violence and was accompanied by inexplicable noises, apparently of no natural origin. Chimneys were blown down, lamentings were heard, also screams of death and fearful prophesyings, the owl screeched and the earth had tremors. Macbeth heard this account his ear wholly directed to the chamber where the King lay murdered and from which the hubub of noise was about to break. He indifferently agreed with the words " 'Twas a rough night". In the next scene the "Old Man" speaking to Ross also describes the storm as unprecedented in his experience of a long life:

> Threescore and ten I can remember well,
> Within the volume of which time I have seen
> Hours dreadful and things strange; but this sore night
> Hath trifled former knowing. (III. iv. 1-4).

Ross sees in the phenomenon heaven's concern for man's act. The description which follows recalls what legend declares as the aspect of Nature at the time of Crucifixion. The King is thus identified with the Christ image. Yet the storm seems an after-thought. In *Julius Caesar* no doubt is left in the mind about its reality but in *Macbeth* we have no such impression. For we have an account of the night supplied by Banquo, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, which does not in the least tally with the impression of a disastrous storm such as comes

from Lennox and others. Banquo looks at the sky, apparently after midnight because then it is that "wicked dreams abuse/ The curtained sleep". He was disturbed and made restless by "cursed thoughts". The sky was starless : "There's husbandry in heaven : /Their candles are all out". This should mean an hour immediately before dawn. Macbeth a little later speaks of the absolute stillness of the night: "Nature seems dead" (II. i. 50). Lady Macbeth heard the owl shriek and the cricket cry and thought of the bellman announcing death, for the murder was then expected every moment. Before the terror and excitement of the murder had scarcely subsided, there came the knocking on the gate followed by the discovery of the murder. The view from within the Castle does not give the least idea of a storm during the night. Could its raging be inaudible within the Castle or was it an after-thought on the part of the dramatist so as to intensify the effect of terror, and more clearly put the murder on a level with the Crucifixion of Christ, thus endowing it with a cosmic significance? Perhaps the latter would be easier to accept as explanation. Shakespeare was always ready to respond to popular expectation. Here he seemed to remember the claim on his attention as a popular dramatist a little after the right time had passed and although the additions are masterly, they failed to be integral.

VI

I have said at the beginning that historical criticism has a limitation which it will not do to forget. For a thorough knowledge of the social life of a period does not tell what is particularly relevant to the quality of an art produced in it, especially when it is symbolical in intention as Shakespeare's is so often. The exploration of Tudor belief and practice may throw light upon Shakespeare's aims and achievement, but part of it is likely to be misleading. For what is significant is the transformation of the material and not the material itself. Its original character is often so completely lost in the process of the change that our intimate knowledge of it is liable to give a wrong view as to the artist's intention. Shakespeare's plays have been regarded as parables. If this attitude is valid, the historical approach will appear to be somewhat pointless. For whoever cares to study the social life in the age of Christ to understand 'the sower and the seed' and 'the prodigal son'?

The Witches in *Macbeth* are significant symbols. What conventional material Shakespeare used in making them does not seem relevant to appreciation. For these Witches are convincing by all standards, as much convincing in the Eastern World as in the Western. And if too much adherence had been given to a particular set of beliefs, it is possible that the universal element would have lost some of its power as a

consequence. The Witches are powers of evil. About these powers the Abbot in *Ascent of F6* makes some significant remarks :

"The Demon is real. Only his ministry and his visitation are unique for every nature. To the complicated and the sensitive like yourself, Mr. Ransom, his disguises are more subtle. He is—shall I say—the formless terror in the dream, the stooping shadow that withdraws itself as you wake in the half-dawn. You have heard his gnashing accusations in the high fever at a very great distance. You have felt his presence in the sinister contours of a valley or the sudden hostility of a copse or the choking apprehension that fills you unaccountably in the middle of the most intimate dinner party."

The Witches, whatever their embodiment, are the 'demon' of this passage but the conflict with evil or its power is a question of metaphysics. For the purpose of dramatic action, a vivid form is necessary. Shakespeare has provided this in *Macbeth*. The parable is that of a man betrayed into making a great betrayal. He sold his soul not for twenty-four years of pleasure like Faust but for a throne, which he found incapable of giving satisfaction unless other things were also present. So he was caught in a web of illusions and wasted his energy thinking that if the thread was rotten in one place it was strong elsewhere. But he could not achieve reality. Everything was illusionary. Reality dwelt elsewhere.

How profound is the symbolism of the play may appear from the fact that the following verses from Macbeth's speech seem to contain the gist of a good part of the Choric Songs in T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*

> Light thickens
> And the crow makes wing to the rooky wood.
> Good things of day begin to droop and drowse,
> While night's black agents to their prey do rouse. (III. ii. 50-53)

SHAKESPEARE AND SANSKRIT DRAMA

Stray Notes on some Parallels

P. LAL

AN off-putting title—and I am aware of it. Too much trivially tangential and ephemeral comment has resulted from finding correspondences—often forced ones—between Sanskrit drama and European. Yet it is true that Goethe picked up his idea of a Prelude to *Faust* from the *nāndi* in *Shakuntalā*, and was so impressed by *The Toy Cart* of Sudraka that he paraphrased the drama in his poem *The God and the Bayadère* (which became the basis of a popular ballet *Le Dieu et la bayadère*, staged throughout Europe in 1830).

One swallow doesn't make a summer of comparative studies, even if one admits that paucity of good translations has been responsible for the negligible influence of Sanskrit plays on Western drama. Even the stylised *Noh* has done better. The parallels in the present essay are offered as guide-lines only, and I have jotted them down in the form of notes—signposts towards a fuller study. They need to be prefaced by a quick summary of Sanskrit drama's distinguishing characteristics (which I reproduce from the introduction to my book *Great Sanskrit Plays in Modern Translation*).

1. Since the law of Karma mechanically dispenses a kind of cosmic justice for every thought, word, and deed, no occurrence in human life can be considered as really tragic—hence the entire absence of tragedy as an art form. Bharata, in fact, forbids the representation of death on the stage. (This could stand fruitful comparison with the aesthetics and ethics of Shakespeare's last plays).
2. Sanskrit (literary, "cultivated" or "perfected") is spoken by all Brahmin and noble characters in the play, while Prakrit (the vernacular) is reserved for menials and, generally, women. (There is no need to press the parallel between Shakespeare's U and non-U !)
3. Lyrical stages in strict Sanskrit metres alternate with frequent use of prose. Since it is difficult to manipulate Sanskrit metrics to suit the needs of Prakrit, no woman normally expresses herself in verse. (Shakespeare's use of prose and verse to suit emotional and dramatic needs is an obvious parallel).

4. The jester (*Vidushaka*) normally has a prominent rôle and in many respects closely resembles Shakespeare's wise clown.
5. Unities of time and place are observed up to a point. More important, however, is the tendency to portray not real characters but ideal types, without losing the qualities that go into the making of characters as separate, unique personalities. (A comparison with the symbolic handling of characters in Shakespeare's last plays will be helpful).
6. A benediction (*nāndi*) opens each play and, generally, closes it. This is spoken by the Stage Manager and invokes blessings on the audience. (A parallel, on secular lines, is the Prologue to *Henry V* and Rosalind's Epilogue in *As You Like It*).
7. The main sentiment or flavour (*rasa*) tends to be either heroic or erotic. (The *sānta* quality of Shakespeare's last plays will be pointed out later).
8. The number of acts varies from one to ten, and the play falls in any one of the ten major or eighteen minor categories of drama. (Shakespeare has his own structural strictnesses).
9. Scenes are indicated by the entrance of one person and the exit of another. There is, strictly speaking, no front curtain, though the use of one in modern presentation will not affect the dramatic movement. (How the use of one vitally affects the question of Hamlet's alleged madness is brilliantly discussed by J. Dover Wilson in his analysis of the Nunnery Scene).

The Stage

A word about the stage. This is important because stage conditions in Shakespeare's time and those between the 1st-10th centuries in India have interesting similarities, and can occasionally help to illuminate the text.

In both, the absence of a curtain dividing the audience from the actors should be noted. The *yvaana* (stage-divider) was probably the curtain that separated the green-room from the stage proper. From the green-room came the Stage Manager (*Sutradhāra*) direct on to the stage; in Shakespeare's time the performance began with a trumpet-blast, followed by an actor who spoke the Prologue. Even elementary stage sets were conspicuous by their absence. In *The Toy Cart*'s remarkable opening Scene in which Vasantasenā flees from the incorrigibly amórous brother-in-law of the king, the action takes place in almost complete darkness, punctuated by the glitter of her jewels, the jingling of her anklets, and "the perfume of her floewrs." Otherwise the set is bare. The scene where the gamblers dice in front of a ruined temple shrine is equally bare. In Shakespeare's time, a placard hung upon one of the

doors bore the legend of Venice or Verona, as the case might be; no other indication was there of the *mise-en-scene*. The Prologue in *Henry V* is over-conscious of this limitation : "Can this cockpit hold/The vasty fields of France ? or may we cram/Within this wooden O the very casques/That did affright the air at Agincourt ?" Apparently the cockpit could; and did.

But the contrasts are vivider. The Sanskrit theatre was an extremely formalized affair, and the seating arrangements, as indicated in Bharata's *Nātya-Shāstra*, not only reflected the existing social hierarchy but preserved dignity in the auditorium (most of the time at least, for burly guards "carrying sticks" had instructions to eject any over-excited member of the audience). "The master of the house should take his seat in the centre," says the *Sangita-Ratnākara*, "on a throne : the occupants of the private apartments should be seated on his left and persons of rank on his right. Behind each group are the chief officers of the state or household, and poets, astrologers, physicians, and men of learning are to be seated in the centre."

In Shakespeare's time, decorum was more honoured in the breach than in the observance. Sanskrit drama's female rôles were all played by women; one reason for boys with "cracked penny" voices playing female rôles in Elizabethan drama was that that the stage then was too boisterous a place for women. A contemporary chronicle records that, whenever plays were staged, "business suffered in the shops, processions and funerals were obstructed, and perpetual causes of complaint arose".

Female Characterization

"Shakuntalā's simplicity is natural, that of Miranda is unnatural. The different circumstances under which the two were brought up account for this difference. Shakuntalā's simplicity was not girt round with innocence, as was the case with Miranda. We see in Act I that Shakuntalā's two companions did not let her remain unaware of the fact that she was in the first bloom of youth. She had learnt to be bashful. But all these things are external. Her simplicity, on the other hand, is more deeply seated, and so also is her purity. To the very end the poet shows that she had no experience of the outside world. Her simplicity is innate. True, she knew something of the world, because the hermitage did not stand altogether outside society; the rules of home life were observed here too. She was inexperienced though not ignorant of the world; but trustfulness was firmly enthroned in her heart. The simplicity which springs from such trustfulness had for a moment caused her fall, but it also redeemed her for ever. This trustfulness kept her constant to patience, forgiveness, and loving kindness,

in spite the cruellest breach of her confidence. Miranda's simplicity was never subjected to such a fiery ordeal : it never clashed with knowledge of the world".

Thus Tagore. His famous essay on *Shakuntalā* (translated by Jadunath Sarkar) is a good example of the percipience which a trained, sensitive, and usefully prejudiced intelligence brings to the study of comparative literature. He begins by rapturously accepting Goethe's excessive praise, appropriately couched in a gushing poem, of *Shakuntalā*; "his stanza", says Tagore, "breathes not the exaggeration of rapture, but the deliberate judgment of a true critic". Be that as it may, Tagore takes it as a springboard for a comparative judgment of Shakuntalā and Miranda, in which Miranda—poor occidental girl—comes off with less credit than her oriental counterpart.

It is my contention that words like "natural" (Shakuntalā) and "unnatural" (Miranda) have little relevance to a proper *literary* appreciation of the plays ; they are extensions of the semi-sociogical criticism Tagore frequently indulged in, the kind which made him refer once, in a hugely sweeping (though not entirely inaccurate) generalization, to Eastern civilization as "forest-based" and Western as "city-based".

A different approach would perhaps be more fruitful, purely from the aesthetic viewpoint. Sanskrit drama's heroines are surrounded by flowers—a flowery world is their element—"sweets to the sweet". Shakuntalā of course : there is the beautiful opening scene in which she, Priyamvadā and Anasuyā pick flowers. It has symbols of fertile feminine beauty : deer, flowers, the spring creeper, the mango tree, and a bee. "The vine has budded prematurely", explains Robert Stein, "symbolizing Shakuntalā's entry into womanhood. The creeper has chosen a mate—the mango tree which will symbolize the stable and true aspects of Dushyanta's character". But Vāsavadattā too, in her forlorn state, waiting for her husband Udayana to be married to Padmāvati, prettily weaving a marriage garland of symbolic flowers (the *avidhavā-karana* specially is used, the flower that prevents widowhood). In the same scene the *sephālikā* and *āsana* are in full bloom. And Harsha's *Ratnāvali* is utter floral glory, this sweet comedy of errors with erotic undertones is transformed in scene after scene into a *nātya* drenched with colour and fragrance.

Perdita, Miranda and Cymbeline also live in a world of flowers, giving and taking beauty. Specially Perdita :

> Here's flowers for you ;
> Hot lavender, mints, savoury, marjoram ;
> The marigold, that goes to bed wi' the sun
> And with him rises weeping—
> Daffodils
> That come before the swallow dares, and take

The winds of March with beauty; violets dim,
But sweeter than the lids of June's eyes
Or Cytherea's breath; pale primroses
That die unmarried, ere they can behold
Bright Phoebus in his strength.
(*The Winter's Tale*, IV; 3)

Comparative criticism can, of course, lead to exaggerated claims. Mr. C. L. Holden, in a little-known essay, contrasts *Shakuntalā* with *Antony and Cleopatra*. "The thought of Dushyanta and of her love for him possessed her completely. But the possession is spiritual, her ecstasy is spiritual. We may contrast those scenes in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* where the love is physical. The richness and splendour of Cleopatra and her entourage, the extravagance of the court, the profusion of wealth, all these fasten on to Antony's soul, and he feels them and is conscious of the real nature of what is attracting him. A true parallel to Shakutalā's rapture would be hard to find in European literature. We have the amazing strength of love shown in many a Bible story—Rachel, Rebecca, Ruth. We have the passion of love shown in Dido, Hero, Helen, Desdemona and Beatrice. But this absorbed delight in love is nowhere else shown than in Kalidāsa".

The point surely is whether Kalidāsa approved of such an "absorbed delight in love". One good indication that he didn't is that he makes it the reason for Shakuntalā's rejection. Because Shakuntalā has ignored the sage Durvasa—something no Indian girl, no matter how much in love, should do !—she invites her misfortunes. Just because she is a "lady of flowers" does not turn Shakuntalā into a Sita of unimpeachable love and loyalty. I am inclined to agree with the French orientalist, Mme. Bader who, as early as 1867, explained in her book *Women in Ancient India* that Kalidāsa's Shakuntalā is a less dignified creature than the Shakuntalā of legend : "she is more tender and more touching, but only more touching because of her greater weakness". The problem Shakespeare must have faced—how to make the "absolutely" innocent Miranda a credible stage character—is paralleled by the problem Kalidāsa faced—how to turn a lady of flowers into the mother of a prince.

FROM MEDIEVAL TO MODERN : A STUDY OF *TROILUS AND CRESSIDA*

KAJAL SEN GUPTA

SHAKESPEARE is for all time. But today no one makes the mistake of concluding that he is not of an age. He belongs to one of the most exciting periods of European history and we shall understand him best when we place him against his proper background, the Renascence.

Shakespeare himself in his exploration of the human mind must have often wondered on the great change effected by the Renascence on the medieval mind. Knowing human nature as he did, he would realize also that such a change can never be a simple one and that in different men it would bring forth different attitudes. Would he not, quite naturally, want to analyze all the complex attitudes born of the new philosophy? What better way of doing this than to take a story which was steeped in medieval attitudes and medieval philosophies, and then to reshape it along modern lines? It would not do to take a modern theme, for then the contrast would not be brought out; nor would it do to take a typically medieval romance, for the material might be recalcitrant to a modern handling. It would have to be a story which represented the Middle Ages, but was not of it, that is to say, a particularly medieval treatment of an originally non-medieval story. We are led directly to think, as no doubt Shakespeare was, of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*.

Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* has been a puzzle to critics. In many ways it is the least dramatic of his plays. It is full of councils and debates, and contains far too many philosophical discussions. Wilson Knight[1] has resolved the whole play into a conflict between intuition and intellect. But I find it far more complex than that. There are too many philosophical attitudes involved, and a single black-and-white label will not explain all the subtle variations between a Troilus, a Hector, an Agamemnon, Ulysses, Nestor, Achilles and Thersites. To Shakespeare himself, of course, not one of these attitudes may be ascribed. Chameleon-like, he always succeeded in keeping his own identity secret. Nor need we take into serious consideration those critics who find a link between Cressida and the Dark Lady of the Sonnets. *Troilus and Cressida* is, in fact, a 'thesis' play, a 'discussion' play, and the confusing multiplicity of ideas in it will form themselves into a pattern only if we regard the play as an attempt by Shakespeare to present the

Renascence values of life in deliberate contrast to the medieval values presented in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*.

We may safely assume that Shakespeare was familiar with the earlier poet's work. Chaucer's reputation was firmly established in the 15th century. Every major writer of this period has referred to him, and we hear the complaint that people "speak nothyng but Chaucer".[2] Lydgate refers to "The noble rethor poet of Briteine", Hoccleve calls him "his maister Çhaucer" and 'flour of eloquence', Caxton describes him as "that noble and grete philosopher", Foxe mentions him in *Ecclesiasticall History*, Webbe calls him "the God of English Poets"[3] and Spenser writes in his *Faerie Queene*:

> Dan Chaucer well of Englishe undefyled
> On fames eternall beadroll worthie to be fyled.
> (Bk. IV. Canto ii, st. 32)

Spenser's reference is particularly significant because Spenser is one of the few poets whom Shakespeare actually refers to by name:

> Spenser to me, whose deep conceit is such
> As, passing all conceit, needs no defence.
> (*The Passionate Pilgrim*, st. 3)

The poem, *Troilus and Criseyde*, was definitely regarded as a masterpiece in the 16th century. Erasmus speaks of it, and Sidney in *An Apology for Poetrie* (1581 ?) refers to this alone of Chaucer's works : "Chaucer undoubtely did excellently in hys *Troilus and Cresseid*". Shakespeare's immediate sources for the legend were, as has been more or less established, Lydgate and Caxton, and both writers refer to Chaucer for a fuller account. "Who that list to heare of al their love, let him read the booke of Troilus that Chaucer made, wherein hee shall finde the storie whole".[4]

Out of curiosity at least, Shakespeare would have read Chaucer's poem. A number of direct links with *Troilus and Criseyde* may be found in Shakespeare's plays, particularly *Troilus and Cressida*, but it would take too long to go through them. The New Variorum edition of *Troilus and Cressida* (1953), provides a list of such parallels, (pp. 447-449) but it is not exhaustive. In the context of the present discussion, however, it is Shakespeare's departures from Chaucer that are of more interest.

Christian dogma had formed the basis of all things medieval, and had fixed the limits of philosophical speculation. In the 6th century Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae* which Chaucer had translated, the function of Lady Philosophy, when she appears before Boethius in prison, is, clearly, to justify the ways of God to man. In such a God-orientated framework, the supreme bliss is union with God, and since such a union is not possible here, the goal of man is not this world but the hereafter. The emphasis is on the spiritual, rather than the mate-

rial aspects of existence. *Contemptus mundi* on the one hand, *amor dei* on the other; and Chaucer's Parson in the *Canterbury Tales* ends his sermon with the thought of "the endelees blisse of hevene" before him (C. *Tales*, X[I], 1078-9).

By the beginning of the 15th century the spirit of criticism and reflection broke out in revolt against authority and tradition, and the great scientific movement began, heralded by Leonardo da Vinci (1452—1519) and Copernicus (1473—1543). The new age turned its gaze from heaven to earth, from implicit faith in supernatural truths to rational analysis of empirical facts, from glorification of God's omnipotent sway to wonder at man's own abilities. Christianity, of course, remained fully alive all through the Renascence period, but the Reformation did bring with it an increasing emphasis on man's direct responsibility for his actions. Shakespeare may or may not have been an orthodox Christian in his own life, but a conscious Christian approach to life is not present in his plays, and his heroes generally work out their own salvation without much help from God. It is this process of change from medieval to modern that we notice when we place side by side, Chaucer's and Shakespeare's treatments of the Troilus legend.

The medieval world of *Troilus and Criseyde* is dominated by the emphatic presence of external and higher powers, shaping, guiding, controlling and presiding over the human scene. Every single human action is hemmed in by reference to higher powers. The Gods may be Christian or pagan, but the human attitude remains consistently dependant, and we note the essentially passive rôles of the human beings in their journey through life. They *do* nothing, things happen to them. Even Pandarus who had so officiously organized the lives of Troilus and Criseyde, eventually realizes his own impotence :

> For dredeles, for hertes ese of yow
> Right fayne I wolde amende it, wiste I how. (V. 1740-1),

and is finally silenced :

> .... a worde he knowde he seye. (V, 1729).

When Troilus falls in love he praises Cupid and asks his pardon for his former scepticism (I, 422-424). Pandarus appears on the scene and together they pray again (I, 932-938). When Pandarus broaches the subject to Criseyde (Bk II), almost every sentence contains the name of God—"And God woot", . . . "and for the love of God", . . . "I prey to God", . . . "as helpe me God". Before Troilus meets Criseyde he prays to God, and afterwards he offers his thanks to God. Without divine assistance he is incapable of action.

Criseyde's nature is far more complex, but here also, we notice a strange unwillingness to assume responsibility for her own actions. In fact she cannot do it, and her conscience is easily satisfied provided she herself has not been directly instrumental in creating the situa-

tion. When Pandarus makes any suggestion to her she is always horrified. On her own initiative she will never arrange a meeting with Troilus, but when the matter is taken out of her hand and she finds herself suddenly alone with Troilus in Deiphebus's house, her conscience does not seem to be at all disturbed:

"Sire", quod Criseyde, "it is Pandare and I"

. . . . . .

. . . . . and she right tho

Gan bothe hire hondes softe upon him leye. (III, 68-72)

In Shakespeare's world it is precisely on these points that the most significant change of attitude has taken place. No deities or supernatural agencies appear, and there is hardly any reference to the gods, except in conventional exclamatory remarks. As the events take shape, man appears as the architect of his own destiny. There are limits, naturally, to what he can do. Plans turn awry, and love, friendship, charity are all subject, we are told, to envious and calumniating Time (III. iii. 173-174). But the overall impression is never that of human impotence. No one blames the gods, no one turns to the gods for protection. Shakespeare's characters are essentially active, as Chaucer's characters are essentially passive.

There is nothing of Troilus's dependence or Criseyde's shirking of moral responsibility in Shakespeare's lovers. Cressida in her soliloquy shows herself to be fully aware of what she is doing, and she carefully maps out her plan of action without recourse to any of Criseyde's timid self-deception:

Then though my heart's content from love doth bear,

Nothing of that shall from my eyes appear. (I. ii. 286-287).

Troilus is neither helpless nor incapable of action. In the first scene he is impatient and, if anything, chafes at his enforced dependence on Pandarus:

I cannot come to Cressid but by Pandar;

And he's as tetchy to be woo'd to woo... (I. i. 94-95).

Everyone is responsible for his own actions. The endless discussions and war-councils by their very presence in the play create the impression of men who are determined to think and act for themselves. Shakespeare's Hector goes into the field on the fatal day despite warnings and protests on every side. His wife and his father dissuade him, and his sister prophesies his death. Yet he goes out and meets the challenge of fate—"I must not break my faith" (V. iii. 71). He dies, but he dies fighting; there is no attitude of submission. Very different is the picture presented by Chaucer:

The fate wolde his soule should unbodye,

And shapen hadde a mene it out to dryve,

Ayeyens which fate hym helpeth nat to stryve; (V. 1550-1552)

Beside the determined and independent-spirited Hector of Shakespeare, Chaucer's warrior appears as a puppet, powerless in the hands of Fate.

The Renascence attitude of self-reliance is clearly brought out at the war-council of the Greeks. Agamemnon and Nestor have just preached patience and are content to await the trial of what fortune brings (I. iii. 1-54). This is almost in the medieval tradition of passive acceptance. But immediately after comes Ulysses's great speech on Order, and he concludes by making the Greeks themselves directly responsible for the present state of affairs:

. . . . . to end a tale of length,
Troy in our weakness stands, not in her strength. (I. iii. 136-7)

Fate had determined most things in Chaucer's poem. Man cannot evade it, and the most that Pandarus can advise Troilus is to wait and hope that his luck will turn:

Woost thow nat wel that Fortune is comune
To even manere wight in some degree?
And yet thow hast this comfort, lo, parde
That, as hire joies moten overgon,
So mote hire sorwes passen everechon. (I, 843-847)

Bk IV begins with an elaborate reference to Fortune's wheel; man's helplessness and Fate's callousness are both described:

And whan a wight is from hire wheel ythrowe,
Than laugheth she. (IV, 6-7)

It is typical of such a faith-centred, God-based age, that when things go wrong, man seeks to placate the angry goddess:

Fortune, allas the while!
What have I done? What have I the aggylte? (IV, 260-1)

The fate that separates the lovers is part of the larger fate that closes in on Troy:

Fortune which that permutacioun
Of thynges hath . . . . . .
Gan pulleawey the fetheres brighte of Troie
Fro day to day, til they ben bare of joie. (V, 1541-47)

Chaucer has heightened this fatalistic element in his adaptation of Boccaccio's tale. Whatever his dramatic reasons, the atmosphere he has created is heavily medieval, for Fate is a peculiarly medieval concept. One of the favourite debates of the Schoolmen was on fate and free-will, and in Chaucer's translation of Boethius there is a long discussion between Lady Philosophy and Boethius on this topic (V, pr. 3). In Bk IV, *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer has imported a major portion of the Fate-Free-will discussion from Boethius. Troilus muses alone and in a long soliloquy which is dramatically irrelevant, reaches the conclusion—

For al that comth, comth by necessity
Thus to be lorn it is my destinee. (IV, 958-9)

Chaucer's Fate is closely related to the concept of "Mutabilitie"—that all joys are impermanent and will pass away. It is but one step more to reject the pleasures of this world, and the theme of *mutatis mutandis* leads almost every medieval writer to distrust the present and turn to the hereafter. Troilus, even in his wholly pagan world, abjures earthly joys and from "the holughness of the eighthe spere" looks down on the battlefield with contempt (V, 1807-1827); while Chaucer advises his readers:

Repayreth hom fro worldly vanyte,
And of youre herte up casteth the visage
To thilke God that after his ymage
You made, and thynketh al hys but a faire
This world, that passeth soone as floures faire. (IV, 1837-1841)

Chaucer's Fate and Mutability have not disappeared in Shakespeare's play. Shakespeare is equally aware of their overhanging presence, but they have changed their name, and Chaucer's submission has gone. Fate has been replaced by Time. Fate in Chaucer was subject only to God:

But O Fortune, executrice wyrdes
.....Soth is, that under God ye ben oure hierdes . . . (III, 617-18)

This august personage has become in Shakespeare's play a "robber" (IV. iv. 41), "a fashionable host" (III. iii. 165), a "great-sized monster of ingratitude" (III. iii. 147). Time cannot be ignored, but it no longer commands respect, awe and worship.

Kenneth Muir (*Shakespeare Survey* 8. pp. 28-39) has shown how the common theme of Time runs through *Troilus and Cressida* and the *Sonnets*, but he has not emphasized sufficiently the Renascence attitude of mind that it conveys. In his *Sonnets*, Shakespeare makes "war upon this bloody tyrant Time" (*Sonnet* 16) in a way that would have seemed heretical in Chaucer's day. "Devouring Times", he says, "do whate'er thou wilt to the wide world,

But I forbid thee one most heinous crime:
O, carve not with thy hours my love's fair brow. (*Sonnet* 19)

He seeks ways and means by which he may outbid time:—through procreation:

And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defence
Save breed, to brave him when he takes thee hence. (*Sonnet* 12)

through his poetry:

Yet, do thy worst, old Time. Despite thy wrong
My love shall in my verse ever live young. (*Sonnet* 19)

and through the sheer force of his faith in his love:

Love's not Time's fool. . .
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom. (*Sonnet* 116)

When the days slip by, he still does not submit, for man may yet challenge Time by living intensely in the present:

This thou perceiv'st which makes thy love most strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long (*Sonnet* 73)

The Renascence self-reliance, which lies behind its attitude of defiance towards Time rejects, naturally enough, all comforting thoughts of heavenly compensations. In Shakespeare's plays the values usually belong to this life, and Shakespeare hardly ever condemns this world in order to justify the next. *Sonnet* 146 :

Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,
. . . . . .
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;
Within be fed, without be rich no more.

and Lorenzo's speech in *Merchant of Venice* :

Such harmony is in immortal souls,
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it. (V.i.63-65)

are almost unique instances in Shakespeare of the older *contemptus mundi* attitude. Horatio's "flight of angels" is forgotten beside Hamlet's 'The rest is silence' (*Ham*, V. ii, 350), and Othello's last thoughts are of this life, not the next :

"I have done the state some service, and they know't—"
(*Oth.*, V. ii, 342)

The lessening certainty of what will happen when we die brings with it a quickening awareness of the all-too-brief present. Scattered through *Twelfth Night* are the songs of Feste :

What is love? Tis not hereafter;
Present mirth hath present laughter;
What's to come is still unsure (II.iii.46-48)

Time is the great enemy of life; therefore, sings the Page in *As You Like It* :

take the present time
With a hey and ho and a hey nonny no. (V. iii. 28-29)

'Youth's a stuff will not endure' is a theme that has been sung by poets of all ages. The typical medieval reaction has already been analyzed, and in a later age it plunged Keats into melancholy. The Renascence treatment of the theme is peculiarly its own : the insecurity of present joy serves only to heighten its value, and the shadow of Time's chariot intensifies the enjoyment of life.

In *Troilus and Cressida* Ulysses, giving practical advice to Achilles, describes at length Time's power, and analyzes ways and means by which Time may be defeated at its own game. "The present eye praises the present object", therefore "take the instant way" . . . "keep then the path" . . . "perseverance, dear my lord, keeps the honour bright".

(III. iii, 145-190). No one ever minimises Time's power in this play. The awareness is no less than in Chaucer, and Troilus remarks on it when he takes leave of Cressida. It is true, he can find no remedy against Time, but there is no note of submission in his speech. He despises Time, inspite of its power over him.

Injurious time now with a robber's haste
Crams his rich thievery up, he knows not how. (IV.iv.41-42)

Agamemnon, welcoming Hector to the Grecian camp, is aware only of the reality of the present, for Time swallows all else :

What's past and what's to come is strew'd with husks
And formless ruin of oblivion :
But in this extant moment, faith and troth,
. . . . . .
From heart of very heart, great Hector, welcome. (IV.v.166-171)
Bids thee, with most divine integrity,

As in Chaucer, Fate inexorably closes in on Troy. Cassandra's constant warnings heighten the sense of imminent tragedy and when Hector dies, Troilus knows that his beloved city is foredoomed to destruction :

Frown on, you heavens, effect your rage with speed.
Sit, gods, upon your thrones, and smile at Troy
I say at once let your brief plagues be mercy,
And linger not our sure destructions on. (V. x. 6-9)

Yet—and this is where the similarity with Chaucer ends—no one gives in. When Ulysses taunts Hector:

Yond towers, whose wanton tops do buss the clouds,
Must kiss their own feet (VI. v. 220-21).

Hector calmly replies:

The end crowns all,
And that old common arbitrator, Time,
Will one day end it. (IV. v. 224-226)

On the battlefield Hector fights like one possessed—"there is a thousand Hectors in the field" (V. v. 10); while Troilus, with Ilium crashing around him, hurls defiance at Fate and rushes into battle:

Let Titan rise as early as he dare,
I'll through and through you. (V. x. 25-26)

Chaucer's submission was peaceful, if passive. In Shakespeare's play, the human arrogance intensifies our horror, for we know that Fate and Time will ultimately win. The tragedy becomes almost macabre in effect, and our last glimpse of the Trojans is as of frenzied men dancing on the edge of doom.

The Renascence emphasis on the present results in the emergence of a number of new values. Chief among them is honour. In the mediaeval period the sentiment does exist as an aspect of the chivalric

code but it has no philosophical support. It is significant that Lancelot, the symbol of chivalric honour, is denied the highest prize—a vision of the Holy Grail. The mediaeval attitude is well summed up by Dante through the character of Oderigi, the illuminator, who discourses on the vanity of worldly fame :

> O powers of man ! how vain your glory, nipped
> E'en in its height of verdure, if an age
> Less bright succeed not
> . . . . . .
> . . . . . The noise
> Of worldly fame is but a blast of wind,
> That blows from diverse points, and shifts its name,
> Shifting the point it blows from. (*Paradiso*, XI, 91-101)[5]

Chaucer's Knight in the *Canterbury Tales*

> loved chivalrie,
> Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie (C. *Tales*, I[A], 45-46),

but it is all in the service of Christ. Criseyde does refer to honour a few times, but what she has in mind is her social reputation, a very different thing, and Secrecy, one of the requirements of the Courtly Love Code, can look after that. Troilus is the devotee of Love's religion, and in his service to Cupid it follows only incidentally that

> he bicom the friendlieste wighte
> The gentileste, and ek the moost fre . . . (I, 1079-80)

Honour, however, forms a major theme of discussion in Shakespeare, and a major pursuit of many of his heroes. Henry V, the ideal Renascence hero says :

> . . . . . if it be a sin to covet honour,
> I am the most offending soul alive. (*Hen.* V, IV. iii. 28-29)

For Hotspur it were an easy leap

> To pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon ;
> Or dive into the bottom of the deep,
> Where fathom-line could never touch the ground,
> And pluck up drowned honour by the locks ;
> (1 *Hen.* IV, I. iii. 202-205)

Cassio, overwhelmed with shame after the brawl, cries out :

> Reputation, reputation, reputation ! O, I have lost
> my reputation ! I have lost the immortal part of myself,
> and what remains is bestial. (Oth., II. iii. 253-255)

Within every idealistic framework however, a counter-idealism is at work, and the amoral, naturalistic attitude is presented through Falstaff's musings on honour :

> What is honour ? A word. What is in that word ?
> Honour. What is that honour ? Air . . . . But will it not
> live with the living ? No. Why ? Detraction will not

suffer it. Therefore I'll none of it. Honour is a mere
scutcheon (1 *Hen. IV*, V. i. 135-144).

But Falstaff, while supplying a corrective of sanity and commonsense, does not negate the other view.

In *Troilus and Cressida*, honour is discussed at length in both the Trojan and Grecian camps. Troilus passionately upholds the cause of Priam's honour, and urges that the war should continue for this reason alone:

Will you with counters sum
The past-proportion of his infinite,
And buckle in a waist most fathomless
With spans and inches. . . . (II, ii. 28-31)

Though Helen has lost the glamour that originally invested her, and lives are lost daily on every side, still the cause of honour outweighs all other considerations. It is glory that they affect, more than the performance of their heaving spleens (II. iii. 195-196), and for this, even Helen becomes "a theme of honour and renown" (II. iii. 199). Hector is moved by his brother's argument, and abandons his earlier caution for a cause,

that hath no mean dependence
Upon our joint and several dignities. (II. iii. 192-193)

Later, Hector is touched to the quick when Ajax insults him, and proudly says:

Not Neoptolemus so mirable
. . . . . .
. . . . could promise to himself
A thought of added honour torn from Hector. (IV. v, 142-145)

On the last day, when wife, sister and father forbid him to go, he turns a deaf ear to them, and upholds honour as dearer even than life:

Life every man holds dear; but the dear man
Holds honour far more precious-dear than life. (V. iii. 27-28)

Ulysses has a long conversation with Achilles on the subject of honour (III. iii. 95-189). Like the others he also stresses its importance, and regards its pursuit as one of the major purposes of life. He rebukes Achilles for having 'cased' his reputation in his tent (1.187), and so neglected his duty. He warns Achilles to be on guard always against Time and emulation, and offers suggestions whereby he may keep his 'honour bright'. But the most interesting part of the conversation occurs earlier in the scene. Virtue, says Ulysses, lives only by reflection (11.95-102). Achilles does not quite understand him, and replies that beauty, of course, exists, but awareness of beauty comes when it is commended by other peoples' eyes. He concludes "this is not strange at all" (11.102-111). But the drift of Ulysses's argument suggests that beauty or virtue does not really exist until and unless it has

been reflected in the mirror of the world:

> ...no man is the lord of anything,
> Though in and of him there be much consisting,
> Till he communicate his parts to others; (II.115-117)

Public opinion not only reflects, but also brings out the latent virtues of man. Man cannot and does not realize his own capabilities until

> ...he behold them formed in th'applause
> Where th'are extended; who, like an arch, reverb'rate
> The voice again; (II.119-121)

By Ulysses's definition, therefore, human virtues are essentially public, not private virtues. The world's opinion is the deciding factor, and honour automatically becomes the highest of human pursuits. Nothing could more clearly illustrate the Renascence doctrine of life, by which all values are judged in the context of this world.

Every age has its "unintellectuals", and the Renascence is no exception. Shakespeare has not failed to portray them—the unthinking group—in Cressida and Pandarus on the Trojan side, in Achilles and the "blockish" Ajax among the Greeks. It is ironical, and Shakespeare surely meant it to be so, that they too, like the others, live in the present; but unlike the others, they are unaware of the deeper significance of life and have no philosophy to support them.

Like all superficial persons Cressida indulges in hyperbolic protestations of her love:

> Why tell you me of moderation
> The grief is fine, full, perfect, that I taste,
> And violenteth in a sense as strong
> As that which causeth it. (IV. iv. 2-5)

But, being superficial, her grief exists only for the moment. She veers with every wind and readily adapts herself to her new circumstances. Ulysses rightly describes her charms as

> sluttish spoils of opportunity
> And daughters of the game. (IV. v. 62-63)

Pandarus is well-meaning, but lives only on the physical plane of existence. He is sorry for the lovers, but can do nothing. It is typical of the level of their intelligence that Pandarus and Cressida expend their wit in sly innuendoes and unfinished jokes on love and sex (IV. ii. 21-39), creating an atmosphere of unhealthy obscenity so different from Troilus's frank sensuality. The caterer to the body's pleasures is fittingly rewarded at the end by the body's pains—"a whoreson tisick" and "a rheum in mine eyes" and "an ache in my bones" (V. iii. 101-107).

Chaucer's Criseyde and Pandarus were complex characters but their complexity was of the individual psychological type. In Shakespeare's play, where the emphasis is entirely on the conflict of values, psychological complexity of the Chaucerian type would have detracted from the

central theme. Perhaps for this reason, Shakespeare has thus simplified these two characters.

Achilles and Ajax belong to an earlier, a more primitive age of brawn, where brute strength is the only thing that matters. They think that wars are won with muscles, not with brains:

> the still and mental parts
> That do contrive how many hands shall strike
> . . . . . .
> Why, this hath not a finger's dignity:
> . . . . . .
> So that the ram that batters down the wall,
> For the great swinge and rudeness of his poise,
> They place before his hand who made the engine. (I. iii. 200-208)

Achilles is moved by a momentary spark of feeling when "Patroclus' wounds" rouse "his drowsy blood" (V. v. 32). But it is no more than the jungle instinct of revenge, and the ferocious bestiality of the murder of Hector reveals him to be what he is—an animal.

Thersites cannot be dismissed lightly. He stands midway between the unthinking group and the serious philosophers of life. He is intelligent, but is warped by a total lack of any kind of values. Completely frustrated in his own life, he hates himself for putting up with the insults of Ajax, Achilles and Patroclus, for he is intelligent enough to despise them:

> How now, Thersites! What, lost in the labyrinth of
> thy fury? (II. iii. 1-2)

He should doubly despise himself, but he adopts the self-defensive attitude of all those who fail in life—he despises the world instead. And so, Diomed becomes "an abominable varlet" (V. iii. 2), Troilus a "scurvy doting foolish young knave" (V. iii. 3), Nestor a "stale old mouse-eaten dry cheese" (V. iii. 9), and Ulysses a "dog-fox" (V. iii. 10). Those who see in Thersites Shakespeare's own cynical commentary on life have not understood his character. Thersites's cynicism is generated from a disgust with himself, and is not a philosophy of life at all. Shakespeare in any case is not interested in giving his own view of life in this play. He is only presenting to us the varied human types that exist in all ages, and particularly so in an age of changing values like the Renascence.

Ulysses is the spokesman of the new age, exalting reason and empirical observation above faith and emotion. He is the voice of Omnipotent Reason throughout the play. His is the master-mind, cognisant of anything that happens around him, in control of every situation. It is he who tells the others how Achilles passes the day in his tent, breaking "scurril jests" with Patroclus (I. iii. 146-148); he knows of Achilles's secret love for Polyxena and warns him:

All the commerce that you have had with Troy
As perfectly is ours as yours, my lord. (III. iii. 205-6)

Diomedes's movements have been observed by him:

At Menelaus' tent, most princely Troilus
There Diomed doth feast with him to-night,... (IV. v. 279-80).

And he is the first to announce the awakening of Achilles's wrath (V. v. 30-42). Ulysses's secret service may well be the envy of every military general in history! He is also an unerring judge of human nature. He recognizes Troilus's intrinsic worth (IV. v, 96-112), and penetrates at once to the shallow cheapness of Cressid's charms (IV. v. 54-63).

Not swayed by any emotions, not confused by any conflict of ideas, we have here a powerful intellect, single-mindedly observing the laws of

degree, priority, and place
Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,
Office, and custom, in all line of order; (I. iii. 86-87).

He is aloof, detached. He may work on Achilles's pride (III. iii. 123-141), or watch with silent compassion the upheavals in Troilus's mind, but always, he is unemotional himself. It is significant that when Cressida enters the Greek camp he is the only man present who disdains to tickle his palate by kissing her:

Never's my day, and then a kiss of you. (IV. v. 52)

Ulysses's philosophy of life is expressed in his famous speech on 'degree'. Tillyard[6] analyzes it, and shows it to be directly drawn from the medieval conception of world-order. In many ways it is identical with the picture that Chaucer presents to us in Theseus's speech in the *Knightes Tale* (*C. Tales* I [A], 2987-3040) in the Proem to Bk III of *Troilus and Criseyde* (11.1-42), and in Troilus's song (Bk. III, 1744-1771). Chaucer's own immediate source is Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae* (II, m. 8; IV, pr. 6; IV, m. 6; III, pr. 10), which he himself had translated. Comparing with Ulysses's speech we find the same principle at work, maintaining the harmony, movement and organization of the universe. Chaucer's law controls "man, brid, best, fish, herbe and grene tree (Tr. & Cr. III, 10), it binds "the fyr, the eyr, the water and the lond/In certeyn boundes that they may not flee (*C. Tales* I [A] 2992-93), just as Ulysses's law makes

The heavens themselves, the planets and this centre
Observe degree, priority and place. (I. iii. 85-86)

It is the same traditional world-picture that Ulysses has adopted—with one difference. Where Chaucer bases the whole picture on God and God's creative love, for Ulysses the key-words are "order" and "degree".

From the similarity of the two pictures Tillyard had concluded that there is no sharp cleavage between the Middle Ages and the Renascence. But when a new philosophy is born it always absorbs

within itself what it can of the older philosophies—even as Augustine absorbed Plato, and Aquinas, Aristotle. It is not what has survived from the medieval world-picture, but what has been left out, that is of greater interest to us. Tillyard writes of Ulysses's speech:

> Here is a picture of immense and varied activity . . . The picture, however, though so rich, is not complete. There is nothing about God and the angels, nothing about animals, vegetables and minerals. For Shakespeare's dramatic purposes he brought in quite enough, but it would be wrong to think that he did not mean to imply the two extremes of creation also.[7]

The omission is, however, the most significant part of Ulysses's speech.

When a transition is made from a philosophy of faith to a philosophy based on reason, there is no need to reject the concept of order. But obviously, that cosmic concept of order cannot be ascribed to the divine pressure of love. So the regulating principle becomes degree, priority and place. In Chaucer, Theseus's "First Moevere" first made the "cheyne of love" (C. *Tales* I (A), 2988), and Troilus sings that if "Love aughte lete his bridel go,/Al that now loveth asondre sholde lepe" (*Tr.* & *Cr.* III, 1762-63). There is nothing of this Love in the ordered precision of Ulysses's universe.

> Take but degree away, untune that string,
> And hark what discord follows! (I. iii. 109-10)

God is, of course, nowhere denied. The concept of a First Principle is implied and obviously accepted, and, in the conventional religious and moral writings of the day—Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity* and Sir Thomas Elyot's *Governour*,[8] (from which Shakespeare probably obtained the material for his speech)—God presides over the world-scheme. But the Renascence had brought a shifting of emphasis from the next world to this, from the eternal to the temporal. The philosophic questions of the day concerned themselves with the present, with this life, with the *how* and not the *why* of existence. God's presence is never doubted, but he is irrelevant for the immediate purpose, and can be left out of the picture. Ulysses's world-picture is universal, it is not eternal in its conception, and is in direct contrast to all medieval world-pictures—Chaucer's not excluded—in which the *anagogical* level of existence is always implied, hinting at "supernal things of eternal glory".

Emotion, however, dies hard. Shakespeare's Troilus is on the side of emotion rather than reason. Yet he is so in a peculiarly Renascence way which becomes apparent when we compare him with Chaucer's Troilus. Chaucer had created his hero entirely in the pagan context. He is not a Christian, and, unlike Criseyde, is never moved by Christian scruples. Yet even here, Chaucer cannot abandon the medieval habit of looking beyond the human context in search of permanent values. Christ has been replaced by Cupid, but there has been *no alteration* of

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ironically, arguments of logical precision. Later, with cold rationalism, he tells Hector that war and mercy should not be combined :

For th'love of all the gods,
Let's leave the hermit Pity with our mother ; (V.iii.44-45)

Events prove him to be right, and Hector dies at the hands of a merciless, pitiless Achilles.

Even in the very ecstasy of his love's fulfilment, this nagging reason does not leave him alone and he philosophizes on the essential incompatibility between limitless idealism and the limited framework of human life : "this is the monstruosity in love, lady, that the will is infinite, and the execution confin'd ; that the desire is boundless and the act a slave to limit" (III.ii.78-80). Criseyde is intellectually incapable of understanding him, and her reply is trite and foolish. He bewilders her with his thoughts, and she has to cut him short and bring him down to business with : "Will you walk in, my lord ?" (III.ii.96). Wilson Knight has described Troilus as "a metaphysical lover"[10] but he has not perhaps realized the full significance of his own definition. Troilus "affects the metaphysics" and "perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy when he should engage their hearts, and entertain them with the softness of love".[11] Dryden's remarks on John Donne may well be applied to Troilus, for the very same fusion of mind and heart sustain both the living poet-lover and the lover of Shakespeare's imagination. Troilus has been accused of sensuality, but it is the same frank sensuality, charged with passion and intellect, that we find in Donne's

License my roaving hands and let them go
Behind, before, above, between, below. (*Elegy*, XIX, 11. 25-26)

and Troilus's "Her bed is India ; there she lies, a pearl"; (I.i.99) is almost a foreshadowing of

O my America, my new-found-land. (*Elegy* XIX, 1.27)

We have seen that two emotions move Troilus—love and the honour of war. Wilson Knight[12] suggests that at the opening of the play Troilus's love drives out his warriorship. It is true that in his first soliloquy he complains

Helen must needs be fair,
When with your blood you daily paint her thus.
I cannot fight upon this argument. (I.i.89-91)

But these words are uttered by him while in a state of extreme impatience over the progress of his love. How far he seriously adopts such a cynical attitude at this moment is to be doubted very much when we consider that his defence of the honour of Priam's cause occurs in Act II. Sc. ii well *before* the fulfilment of his love in Act III. Sc. ii. Quite obviously love has *not* driven out his warriorship.

Wilson Knight suggests, further, that Criseyde's betrayal brought

about only a partial disillusionment and that Troilus still had his war-idealism to go back to : "he transfers his allegiance back to his other value, and passionately throws himself body and soul into the war".[13] But such an interpretation wholly misses the tragic significance of the speech beginning : "This she ? No ; this is Diomed's Cressida" (V.ii. 135-158). There is no half-measure in these lines. Criseyde's faithlessness means the end of *everything* to Troilus. There is now no rule in unity itself (1.139), the bonds of heaven are slipped, dissolved and loosed (1.154). It means the complete disintegration of Troilus's universe, and everything, including his ideal of honour, loses its meaning, ceases to exist.

This universal cataclysm occurs because Troilus's idealism is, as has already been mentioned, subjective. The ideal does not rest in the external object. It would then have been easy enough to transfer allegiance from one object to another—which is in fact exactly what Chaucer makes us do in his poem. Love has failed, let us then turn to Christ. But subjective idealism is an attitude of mind, in fact, the attitude itself is the ideal—for what's aught but as 'tis valued ? When Cressida betrays Troilus, Troilus's faith in himself is shaken. His attitude of mind is destroyed, and every other value that this attitude contained is destroyed with it.

He plunges into the action of war, for action is the only relief from pain. But there is no more reference to Priam's honour. He has "venomed vengeance" riding on his sword (V.iii.47) and Revenge is now the only spur to action. When Hector is murdered and then "in beastly sort, dragg'd through the shameful field" (V.x.5), Troilus shakes his fist at the heavens :

> I do not speak of flight, of fear of death,
> But dare all imminence that gods and men
> Address their dangers in. (V.x.12-14)

and redoubling his energy, dedicates himself to a life of vengeance.

> I'll haunt thee like a wicked conscience still,
> That mouldeth goblins swift as frenzy's thoughts.
> . . . . . .
> Hope of revenge shall hide our inward woe. (V.x.28-31)

This is the last we see of Troilus. There is something unfinished in Shakespeare's rendering of the character and we close the book with a strange frustration which Shakespeare perhaps meant us to feel. In his tragedies, the heroes, after the moment of tragic disillusionment, ultimately succeed in working out their own salvation, and before they die they re-affirm their faith in humanity. But Shakespeare draws the curtain over Troilus while he is still in the throes of moral and spiritual agony. Will he turn into a cynic, or will he, like Hamlet and Lear, rediscover himself ? We shall never know.

We have come a long way from Chaucer's world. All the rich

complexity of the Renascence mind has here found its fullest expression, and it would be surprising indeed, if Shakespeare did not have, at the back of his mind, the contrast of the essentially medieval faith and simplicity of Chaucer's Troilus. It has been the aim of this paper to show that such a contrast was present in Shakespeare's mind, and that he had Chaucer's book in his hand when he wrote the play, changing the world of *Troilus and Criseyde* into the world of *Troilus and Cressida*; and through this recreation of the older legend, bringing out the transition from medieval to modern.

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2. Thomas Wilson : *Arte of Rhetoric* (1553).
3. Lydgate : *The Life of Our Lady* (1409-11?); Hoccleve : *The Regement of Princes* (1412); Caxton : *Prohemye to Canterbury Tales* (1483?); Foxe : *Ecclesiasticall History* (1570); Webbe : *A Discourse of English Poetrie* (1586).
4. Lydgate : *Hystorye Sege and Dystruccyon of Troye* (1513), and Caxton : *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* (1475). The extract is taken from Caxton's *Recuyell*, Bk. III, Ch. XV.
5. Cary's translation, *The Vision of Dante* (Oxford, 1923).
6. E. M. W. Tillyard : *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London, 1960).
7. *Ibid*, p. 8.
8. Sir Thomas Elyot : *Boke Named the Governour*. "Hath nat he set degrees and astates in all his glorious warkes?" (Ch. 1, 1531 ed., fol. 2v).

Hooker : *Ecclesiastical Polity*. "God did first proclaime the edicts of his law . . . See we not plainly that obedience of creatures unto the lawe of nature is the stay of the whole world ?" (Bk. I, iii, 2, 1597 ed., pp. 52-53).

9. In Shakespeare "will" is usually associated with passion and arbitrary emotion, and is contrasted with reason and judgement. Cf. *Othello*, III, iii, 240; *Ant. & Cleo*, III, xiii, 3.
10. G. Wilson Knight : *The Wheel of Fire* (London, 1962), Ch. III, p. 64.
11. Dryden : *A Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire* (1693).
12. G. Wilson Knight : *The Wheel of Fire* (London, 1962), Ch. III, p. 70.
13. *Ibid*, p. 70.

COMPOUND EPITHETS IN SHAKESPEARE

DEBDAS SEN

"Why is my verse so barren of new pride,
So far from variation or quick change?
Why with the time do I not glance aside
To new-found methods and to compounds strange?"
(Shakespeare: *Sonnet LXXVI*)

I

A MASTER of the 'simple'[1]—even monosyllabic—word, Shakespeare is perhaps a greater master in 'word-composition', particularly in the formation of compound epithets. He has compound epithets for the prince and the pauper, patricians and the common herd, the honest man and the trickster, the faithful and the inconstant, for a coward as well as for one who is "valour's minion". The scholar, the musician, the courtier, the soldier, the lawyer, the lady and the lover—almost all the familiar types in Elizabethan literature, with many others 'to boot', could be aptly described in compound epithets culled from Shakespeare. In him, moreover, we have compounds for different forms of beauty and ugliness of body or mind. There are epithets not merely for the different types of beard, so fashionable at the time, but also for the man of superior blood by one parent only ('half-blooded', in *King Lear*, V. iii, 81)[2], for one who is false-hearted but with a goodly exterior ('proper-false', in *Twelfth Night*, II. ii, 30), for one who has been cast for too difficult a part ('o'erparted', in *Loves' Labour's Lost*, V. ii, 585), for the woman exhausted by excessive production ('o'erteemed', in *Hamlet*, II. ii, 539) for the girl whose lover dies, or—which is much the same thing for her—is banished, before her love is consummated in marriage ('maiden-widowed', in *Romeo and Juliet*, III. 2. 135).

In the 'brave new world' of Shakespeare, compound epithets are as varied and interesting as the characters themselves. We meet with the 'sad-eyed' justice, the 'shag-eared' villain, the 'lily-livered, action-taking' knave, the 'both-sides' rogue, the 'glass-faced' flatterer; people may be 'milk-livered' or 'high-stomached', 'softly-sprighted' or 'high-minded', 'full-gorged' or 'hungry-starved', 'high-witted' or 'lean-witted', 'constant-qualified' or 'wind-changing' 'tardy-gaited' or 'tiger-footed', 'top-proud' or 'plume-plucked', 'fancy-sick' or 'fancy-free'. It is a world

where a ship may be 'sinking-ripe', a man may be 'reeling-ripe' (when, of course, his wit is 'ale-washed'), or 'weeping-ripe'. It is a world where sapphire is 'heaven-hued', jealousy 'green-eyed', the henpecked husband is 'woman-tired', the tearful man is 'onion-eyed'; where ignorance is 'short-armed', robbers 'large-handed', and a well-matched comparison is a 'hand-in-hand' comparison; where to be unfeeling is to be 'empty-hearted' (though 'full-hearted' means not *full of emotion*, but *full of courage*), to be uncommunicative is to be 'close-tongued', to die in the natural course of time is to be 'timely-parted'; where a lover may be 'lass-lorn', an injury may be 'heart-struck', wounds may be 'honour-owing', and a woman 'honour-flawed'.

Often the best way to 'render' one of Shakespeare's 'untranslatable' compound epithets is to fall back upon another, for synonyms or near-synonyms abound in his plays and poems. Thus 'lily-livered', 'milk-livered', 'white-livered' paraphrase not only each other, but also 'pale-hearted'; likewise, 'beef-witted', 'knotty-pated', 'puppy-headed', 'beetle-headed', 'clay-brained', 'fat-brained', 'fat-witted', etc. explain each other. So, too, 'over-weathered' means 'weather-bitten', 'sorrow-wreathen' is 'grief-short', 'sick-thoughted' is just a bit more intense than 'fancy-sick', 'lust-dieted' (in one interpretation) means 'full-gorged', 'ditch-delivered' is not far removed from 'hedge-born', while the euphemistic 'sun-burnt' is a near-synonym of 'hard-favoured'.

Shakespeare has compound epithets not merely for things beautiful, but also for things ugly, for 'things essential and things circumstantial', things familiar and things strange, things decent and—since he was seraphically free from prudery—things bawdy[3]; but the offence, as Coleridge points out in his reply to the "very serious charge" of immorality against Shakespeare, "was not committed wantonly, and for the sake of offending, but for the sake of merriment . . . what he says is always calculated to raise a gust of laughter, that would, as if were, blow away all impure ideas"[4].

Nor is this all. Shakespeare has compound epithets to suit all the three levels of style distinguished by rhetoricians—the grand, the mean and the low. One example of each will suffice. Thus the first is illustrated by "And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars/From this *world-wearied* flesh" in Romeo's dying speech over Juliet in the tomb, after he has disposed of Paris; the second by Horatio's "The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,/Doth with his lofty and *shrill-sounding* throat/ Awake the god of day"; the third by "'Aroint thee, witch!' the *rump-fed* ronyon cries" in *Macbeth*, I. III. 6.

II

With these preliminary remarks and incidental citations, we may

pass on to illustrate more fully the range and variety, the power and complexity of the compound epithets in Shakespeare:—

"Death and *all-oblivious* enmity" (*Sonnet* LV);
"Did instigate
His *all-too-timeless* speed" (*Lucrece*);
"*Back-wounding* calumny" (*Measure for Measure*);
"The *blood-bolter'd* Banquo smiles uopn me" (*Macbeth*);
"And stop the rising of *blood-sucking* sighs" (*3 Henry VI*);
"Damnable *both-sides* rogue!" (*All's Well*);
"The untuned and jarring senses, O, wind up
Of this *child-changed* father! (*King Lear*);
"These cull'd and *choice-drawn* cavaliers (*Henry V*);
"The *cloud-capp'd* towers, the gorgeous palaces" (*Tempest*);
"Threatening *cloud-kissing* Ilion with annoy" (*Lucrece*);
"Certain half-caps and *cold-moving* nods" (*Timon of Athens*);
"The greedy touch
Of *common-kissing* Titan" (*Cymbeline*);
"O unfelt sore! *Crest-wounding* private scar!" (*Lucrece*);
"I am *custom-shrunk*" (*Measure for Measure*);
"Clamorous demands of *date-broke* bonds' (*Timon of Athens*);
"Else I swoon
With this *dead-killing* news" (*Richard III*);
"The fearful passage of their *death-mark'd* love"
(*Romeo and Juliet*);
"The *death-practised* duke" (*King Lear*);
"His stockings... *down-gyved* to his ancle" (*Hamlet*);
"They are yet but *ear-kissing arguments*" (*King Lear*);
"*Even-handed* justice" (*Macbeth*);
"*Eye-offending* brine" (*Twelfth Night*);
"In maiden meditation, *fancy-free*" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*);
" Infect her beauty,
You *fen-suck'd* fogs, drawn by the powerful sun!" (*King Lear*);
" Thy food shall be
The *fresh-brook* muscles" (*Tempest*);
"It is the *green-eyed* monster which doth mock
The meat it feeds on" (*Othello*);
"*Heart-offending* groans" (*2 Henry VI*);
"*New-lighted* on a *heaven-kissing* hill" (*Hamlet*);
"Enjoy the *honey-heavy* dew of slumber" (*Julius Caesar*);
"*Hydra-headed* wilfulness" (*Henry V*);
"Looking on it with *lack-lustre* eye" (*As You Like It*);
"I am joined with.... no *long-staff* sixpenny strikers"
(*1 Henry IV*);
"The superfluous and *lust-dieted* man" (*King Lear*);
"Change the complexion of her *maid-pale* peace
To scarlet indignation" (*Richard II*);
"The *many-headed* multitude" (*Coriolanus*);
" I have nothing
Of woman in me; now from head to foot
I am *marble-constant*" (*Antony and Cleopatra*);

"Bloody strokes and *mortal-staring* war" (*Richard III*);
"Your *ne'er-cloying* sweetness" (*Sonnet LXVIII*);
"The *ne'er-lust-wearied* Antony" (*Antony and Cleopatra*);
"That *nook-shotten* isle of Albion" (*Henry V*);
"At this *odd-even* and dull-watch o'the night" (*Othello*);
"I will discharge it in either your *straw-colour* beard, your *orange-tawny* beard, your *purple-in-grain* beard, or your *French-crown-colour* beard"
(*A Midsummer Night's Dream*);
"How easy is it for the *proper-false*
In women's waxen hearts to set their forms"! (*Twelfth Night*);
"*Proud-pied* April dress'd in all his trim" (*Sonnet XCVII*);
"The mutable *rank-scented many*" (*Coriolanus*);
"The *rump-fed* ronyon" (*Macbeth*);
"Sitting. . . .by a *sea-coal* fire" (*2 Henry IV*);
"Thy *sea-sick* weary bark" (*Romeo and Juliet*);
"Feed'st thy light's flame with *self-substantial fuel*" (*Sonnet I*);
" Soon decay'd and done
As is the morning's *silver-melting dew*" (*Lucrece*);
"*Silver-shedding tears*" (*Two Gentlemen of Verona*);
"How *silver-sweet* sound lovers' tongues by night!"
(*Romeo and Juliet*);
"Such a deal of *skimble-skamble* stuff
As puts me from my faith" (*1 Henry IV*);
"*Sky-aspiring* and ambitious thoughts" (*Richard II*);
"Your son was misled with a *snipt-taffeta* fellow" (*All's Well*);
"From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of *star-cross'd* lovers take their life" (*Romeo and Juliet*);
"The *steep-up* heavenly hill" (*Sonnet VII*);
"In silent wonder of *still-gazing* eyes" (*Lucrece*);
"Indeed, it is *strange-disposed* time" (*Julius Caesar*);
"*Summer-seeming* lust" (*Macbeth*);
"He makes a *swan-like* end,
Fading in music" (*Merchant of Venice*);
"*Sweet-suggesting* Love" (*Two Gentlemen of Verona*);
"And that same *sword-and-buckler* Prince of Wales"
(*1 Henry IV*);
"If the *tag-rag* people did not clap him and hiss him"
(*Julius Caesar*);
"The *temple-haunting* martlet" (*Macbeth*);
"A jewel in a *ten-times-barr'd-up* chest" (*Richard II*);
"Thy *tender-hefted* nature shall not give
Thee o'er to harshness" (*King Lear*);
"My *tongue-tied* patience" (*Sonnet CXL*);
"Many an orphan's *water-standing* eye" (*3 Henry VI*);
"O, how full of briers is this *working-day* world!"
(*As You Like It*);
"Prithee, tell her but a *worky-day* fortune" (*Antony and Cleopatra*);
"Nor dare I chide the *world-without-end* hour" (*Sonnet LVII*).

III

It is a delightful task to characterize the different types of compound epithets in Shakespeare in his own words, for; after all, he himself is the best commentator on all aspects of his language, often perhaps without his knowing it. We may start by saying that in respect of compound epithets, as in many others, Shakespearean drama (or poetry) is "more fertile-fresh than all the field to see". Some of his compounds are 'fire-new' or 'fresh-fair', some 'momentary-swift', some 'sudden-bold'; some are 'tricksy' or 'pleasant-spirited', some 'by very much more handsome than fine'; a large number are used only once, a few 'tired with iteration'; some are 'working-day' terms, some 'festival' terms; some belong to the category of 'honest plain words', some are 'good-conceited', some 'odd-conceited'; many of these compound epithets 'hold... the mirror up to nature', some are of 'never-cloying sweetness'. Shakespeare, it may be added, has not merely the Compound Modest, but also the Compound Valiant, the Compound Quarrel-some, and so on.

IV

Shakespeare's boldness in the use of language and his original contributions are no less remarkable in respect of compound epithets than in those of single words and phrases, though it is less widely known. Among the compound adjectives used by Shakespeare but not yet recorded from any earlier writer we get the following: *Arm-gaunt* (probably corrupt), *bare-faced, blood-boltered, clip-winged, close-tongu'd, dog-weary, fancy-free, fire-eyed, fire-new, fire-robed, grief-shot, half-blooded, high-blown, high-born, high-judging, high-lone, high-pitched, high-sighted, home-keeping, hunch-back'd, ill-boding, ill-got, ill-starred, lack-lustre, lean-witted, lion-sick, nook-shotten, overweather'd, rug-headed,* and also the use of *hair-breadth* as an adjective, and of *'large-handed'* in the sense of 'grasping'.

We must, however, be on our guard while crediting Shakespeare with verbal inventions. The language of Shakespeare's predecessors and contemporaries has not been as minutely scrutinized as that of Shakespeare himself, and it is just possible that some of the words and expressions or their applications first recorded from Shakespeare had been in use earlier, in speech, if not in writing. As George Gordon points out in his little masterpiece, "to say definitely that Shakespeare or any other author invented a word or a phrase is to say, very often, what we cannot know"[5].

Some of the compound epithets first known to us from Shakespeare have become everyday expressions or have passed into idioms of the language. *High-born, home-keeping, hunch-back'd, ill-got, ill-starred, lack-*

lustre, *hair-breadth 'scapes*, these, at least, are—to use a phrase from *Henry V*—'familiar' to us 'as household words'. To these we may add many more, the popularity of which is perhaps due to Shakespeare: *tongue-tied*, *star-cross'd*, *silver-sweet*, *ear-piercing*, *a . . . mouth-filling oath*, a *heaven-kissing hill*, *young-eyed*, *never-cloying sweetness*, *super-subtle*, a *tell-tale* (woman).

Among the compound adjectives occurring only once in Shakespeare there are such homely, serviceable words as *blood-thirsty*, *blue-eyed*, *cloud-capp'd*, *ear-deafening*, *earth-bound*, *fair-spoken*, *weak-hearted*, *inch-thick*, *low-born*, *open-eyed*, *over-fond*, *tear-stained*. All these have also been woven into the texture of our daily talk.

V

A word or two now about the *uses* to which the compound epithets are put in the plays and poems of Shakespeare. Shakespeare is never a 'one-trunk-inheriting' artist, and the varied effects of the compound epithets in his plays and poems defy analysis. Sometimes he will manage to condense the 'matter' of an entire line into the 'pretty room' of a compound epithet, as in 'maiden-widowed' (*Romeo and Juliet*, III. ii. -135), 'half-blooded' (*King Lear*, V. iii, 81), and 'odd-even . . . watch o' the night' (*Othello*, I. i, 124). It is due to this terrible condensation that some of his compounds lend themselves to different interpretations. How, for instance, are we to explain "strange-achieved gold" in *2 Henry IV*, IV. v. 70? Is it (a) acquired in foreign lands? or (b) gained by unusual methods? or (c) gained for the enjoyment of others?[8] Sometimes the same compound epithet has entirely different significations in different plays; a typical instance is 'half-faced': in "this same *half-faced* fellow, Shadow" (*2 Henry IV*, III. ii, 286), it means 'thin-faced' ('with face as thin as the profile on a coin'); in "out upon this *half-fac'd* fellowship!" (*1 Henry IV*, I. iii, 208), it means, 'half and half', 'imperfect'; in "whose hopeful colours/Advance our *half-fac'd* sun" (*2 Henry VI*, IV. i, 98), it means 'half-visible'.

Sometimes a compound is used for temporary effect—"man-enter'd" in *Coriolanus*, II. ii, 104, for instance, or "water-standing eye" in (*3 Henry VI*, V. vi, 40, or "poor-rich gain" in *Lucrece*, 140.

Many a compound epithet is meant by Shakespeare to be jocular, e.g., 'daughter-beamed' (in *Love's Labour's Lost*, V. ii, 172), or 'high-gravel-blind' (in *The Merchant of Venice*, II. ii, 38); the latter is intended to be an intensive form of 'sand-blind', a link, as it were, between 'sand-blind' and the popular 'stone-blind'. Two more characteristic examples are 'horn-mad' and 'wit-old'. Since 'horn-mad', quite a serious word, meaning 'stark mad' (originally, 'mad with rage like a bull'), and so used by Shakespeare, was sure to remind the Elizabethan audience of

the cuckold's horn, it is used 'playfully' on a few occasions to signify 'mad with rage at having been made a cuckold'. 'Wit-old' (in *Love's Labour's Lost*, V. i, 67) is a nonce-word used for the sake of a play on 'Wittol'.

Compounds play a useful rôle in the expression of abuse and scorn in Elizabethan drama, and Shakespeare is no exception. Not a few of his compound epithets of abuse and raillery are quasi-neological, and these must have been relished by the groundlings. Examples have already been cited. If we repeat some of them here, it is only to emphasize the fact, too often forgotten, that Shakespeare's compound epithets are not all 'air and fire', and that they are sometimes 'loud' rather than 'deep', that Shakespeare is as often 'earth-bound' as 'sky-aspiring'. 'Hedge-born' (1 *Henry* VI, IV. i, 43) and 'ditch-deliver'd' (*Macbeth*, IV. i, 31) well represent the type; to these two may be added the words italicised by us in the following passage from *King Lear*, II. ii : a . . . *three-suited, hundred-pound*, . . . *worsted-stocking* knave; *a lily-liver'd, action-taking* knave; a . . . *glass-gazing* . . . rogue; *one-trunk-inheriting* slave". To much the same category belong words like 'prick-eared', 'flap-eared', 'shag-eared', as well as the whole host of compound adjectives meaning 'stupid'.

Quite a different part is played by the compound epithets in the tragic scenes, where, too, they pour out profusely and spontaneously, when Shakespeare is moved to be 'elemental and tremendous'. Consider, for instance, Othello's "Wash me in *steep-down* gulfs of liquid fire !" or Lear's

> "You sulphurous and *thought-executing* fires,
> Vaunt-couriers to *oak-cleaving* thunderbolts" . . .

A lesser artist would have brought it too perilously near "King Cambyses' vein".

Sometimes Shakespeare, in an opening chorus, will use a compound epithet, the full significance of which is realized only when the play is over,—"the war like Harry" in *Henry V*, for instance, or "star-cross'd lovers" in *Romeo and Juliet*. It not only sets the stage for the play or indicates its theme, but sums up all that the play stands for and signifies.

If the epithet "star-cross'd" keeps ringing in our ears, so too, for diferent reasons, do "the still-vex'd "Bermoothes", for instance, in *The Tempest* I. II. 229, and "drug-damn'd Italy" in *Cymbeline* III. IV. 15, the first by its peculiar music and pictorial quality, the second by its being a miniature picture of the darker side of Renaissance Italy.

"*Thrice-crowned* queen of night" (in *As You Like It*. III. ii, 2) is a page torn from the classical legends and refers to the threefold aspect of the goddess, as Cynthia in heaven, Diana on earth, and Proserpina in the nether world.

In 'the *three-nook'd* world' (*Antony and Cleopatra*, IV. vi, 6), the implications of the epithet may be 'three-nook'd', too : (1) as divided among the Triumvirs, (2) as consisting of Europe, Asia, and Africa, (3) as divided by the Creator into three parts, east, south and west, among Shem, Ham and Japheth.

Shakespeare's 'silver-shedding tears' (*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, III. i. 231) was obviously influenced by Spenser's 'silver-dropping tears', and his '*cloud-kissing* Ilion', (*Lucrece*, 1370) owed not a little to Marlowe's 'topless towers of Ilium', but how do we react to '*world-without-end* hour' (Sonnet LVII) with no Spenser and no Marlowe to look back to ? We cannot explain. We are just left wondering, or, better still, in the language of Shakespeare, we are wonder-wounded'. It is a 'strange-achieved' effect, once more in Shakespeare's own words. We have only to ask

" if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,
That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but a star".

References

1. I have used the word 'simple' in the sense of 'not compound, i.e., consisting of one element'.

2. The line references given in this essay are to the one-volume edition of the Complete Works of Shakespeare by W. J. Craig (re-set in 1943), in the *Oxford Standard Authors* series.

3. See Eric Partridge's *Shakespeare's Bawdy*, which throws light on what he calls "a neglected, yet very important, aspect of Shakespeare's character and art". Partridge asserts that "Shakespeare is never filthy : he is broad, ribald, healthily coarse, unsqueamishly natural, and unaffectedly humorous", a view not far removed from that of Coleridge.

4. *Shakespearean Criticism by S. T. Coleridge*, edited by T. M. Raysor (*Everyman's Library*), Vol. II, p. 92.

5. *Shakespeare's English* (Society for Pure English Tract XXIX). Reprinted in *Shakespearian Comedy and Other Studies*.

6. Professor Dover Wilson, in his "New Shakespeare" edition of *2 Henry IV* hesitantly suggests a fourth interpretation—'hard-won'.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE

PRABODH CHANDRA GHOSH

I

In *All's Well that Ends Well* (IV. 3) appears the following remark, made by a Lord:

> The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together.

It is a very significant remark. In fact, here is the very basis of what Dr. Johnson calls the 'mingled drama' of Shakespeare. Eliot writes:

> But the classification of tragedy and comedy, while it may be sufficient to mark the distinction in a dramatic literature of more rigid form and treatment—it may distinguish Aristophanes from Euripides—is not adequate to a drama of such variations as the Elizabethan.
>
> ('Ben Jonson', *The Sacred Wood*)

But the 'mingled drama' was by no means peculiar to the Elizabethan age. Referring to a kind of drama which may be called tragi-comedy Aristotle writes:

> In the second rank comes the kind of tragedy which some place first . . . it has a double thread of plot, and also an opposite catastrophe for the good and for the bad.
>
> (*Poetics*, trns. Butcher, p. 47)

Placing or analyzing a Shakespearean play is sometimes a problem especially, a play like *Measure for Measure*. Here the 'mingled drama' may be called 'dark comedy' but is the dark light enough ? Is the play closer to tragedy ? Again, does the play, even as a 'dark comedy', present any problem or thesis ? These are only some of the questions which arise in our mind when we approach *Measure for Measure* which, according to Coleridge[1], shows the most painful and the least pleasant part of Shakespeare's genius.

In dramatic literature an interpretation is very often problematic because, unless the dramatist explains (like Shaw) all the details in his preface and stage directions, one can never be quite sure of his intention. Besides, no drama is complete by itself because it depends on performance, and the actor and the director can make it quite different from what it was meant to be by the dramatist himself. There are situations and speeches in which an actor by his voice or gesture can

give to significant marginal moments a meaning which comes as a surprise (sometimes quite pleasant) to the dramatist or critic.

II

The social background of *All's Well that Ends Well* is very different from that of *Measure for Measure*. In the former play the problem, if any, remains confined to a group of individuals. In the latter play the picture of society, which is rather important, is one of evil. The Duke himself admits :

> And liberty plucks justice by the nose;
> The baby beats the nurse, and quite athwart
> Goes all decorum . . . [I : 3]

The problems of Claudio and Angelo are related to the condition of Vienna where, as the Duke admits again :

> I have seen corruption boil and bubble
> Till it o'errun the stew . . . [V : 1.]

The Duke wants to remove this corruption, and yet inconsistently enough, the Christian ethic is almost unduly emphasized in the context of social evils. Besides, there is hardly any indication that this ethic makes any effective change in the social pattern at the end of the play. The play opens with a social problem but ends in a very different manner, the dramatic interest being shifted from the social plane to a complex design of individuals and incidents. The dramatist plays the part of a good neighbour who hushes up a scandal without solving any problem. The problem which is, in a sense, also the thesis of the play is : authority should be so exercised that justice and mercy may be combined for the effective removal of corruption from society. But neither the problem nor the thesis receives a fair and convincing treatment in the play. *Measure for Measure* is an awkward comedy of unconvincing compromise, and neither here nor in *All's Well that Ends Well* do we find any real integration, dramatic or moral. Both the plays stress, at certain moments, the ethical implications of the relation between appearance and reality. But the vision of life which is presented is not clear enough. Rightly does Eliot remark: 'Humankind cannot bear very much reality.'[2]

III

Potts defines a problem play as a drama that

> . . . treats the situations that arise in society simply as moral or political problems in the abstract and without reference to the idiosyncrasies of human nature. (*Comedy*, p. 156)

But this is not what we find in *Measure for Measure*. *Troilus and*

Cressida which is a much deeper and wider exploration of evil comes closer to Potts's description. In a true problem play, the problem as such is the centre of interest. Tillyard remarks :

> When sheer explication . . . takes first place, then we leave the realm of tragedy for that of the problem play. Here it is the problems themselves, their richness, their interest, and their diversity, and not their solution or significant arrangement that come first.
>
> (*Shakespeare's Problem Plays*, p. 31)

But when we think of *Measure for Measure* do we think of the richness of its problems, their interest and their diversity? In fact, we find here complications in situations and characters, problems of action rather than thought. It is therefore difficult to agree with Charlton when he says : 'Intellect rather than imagination is forcing the issue.'[3]

Measure for Measure is generally known as a 'dark comedy.' Charlton explains :

> That epithet is generally taken to mean, not only that in these plays the seamier, indeed the nastiest, side of life obtrudes more persistently than elsewhere in Shakespeare, but that their underlying mood is one of bitter cynicism.

But Grierson rightly points out :

> Even in those plays, again, in which one detects an alloy of bitterness, *Measure for Measure* and *Troilus and Cressida*, there is no criticism of accepted moral standards and no arraignment of Providence
>
> (*Cross-Currents in English Literature of the Seventeenth Century*, p. 121)

In fact, the critical element is not strong enough. It exposes what is evil but it allows the play to drift towards an awkward compromise.

Critics like Knight, Chambers, Leavis and Battenhouse[4] contend that *Measure for Measure* is a Christian play. Knight says :

> . . . the plot is so arranged that each person receives his deserts in the light of the Duke's—which is really the Gospel—ethic . . . The Duke, like Jesus, is the prophet of a new order of ethics . . . The Duke's ethical attitude is exactly correspondent with Jesus': the play must be read in the light of the Gospel teaching, if its full significance is to be apparent.

Knight goes even so far as to emphasize the similarity between the language of Shakespeare and that of the Gospels of John and Matthew. But all this, although quite interesting, is also rather confusing because *Measure for Measure* was composed in 1604, while the Authorised Version appeared in 1611.

IV

What is the vision of man in the dark comedies of Shakespeare?

Hamlet, even when he says, 'man delights not me', gives us the Renaissance conception of man :

> What a piece of work is man ! how noble in reason ! how infinite in faculty ! . . . in action how like an angel ! in apprehension how like a god ! the beauty of the world ! the paragon of animals ! [II : 2]

In spite of the revelation of evil in *Hamlet* this faith in man, which is central to tragedy, remains unshaken. But a play like *Measure for Measure* or *All's Well that Ends Well* leaves a very different impression, even though there are some really good and honest men and women in these plays. They are the daylight of these plays but the light is not strong enough to dispel darkness :

> man, proud man
> Drest in a little brief authority,
> Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
> His glassy essence,—like an angry ape,
> Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
> As make the angels weep : [*Meas. for M.*, II : 2]
>
> Thou hast neither youth nor age
> But as it were, an after-dinner's sleep
> Dreaming on both. [*Meas. for M.*, III : 1]

In *All's Well that Ends Well* a French lord says : '. . . as we are ourselves, what things are we !' (IV : 3). Again, in the same scene Parolles whines : ' . . . let me live, sir, in a dungeon, i' the stocks, or anywhere, so I may live.' And Claudio says in *Measure for Measure* : 'Sweet sister, let me live.' (III : 1). When Hamlet speculates on death, the motif is, in reality, the sense of mystery in life. In *Measure for Measure* it is arrant cowardice, a complete collapse, when Claudio says :

> Ay, but to die, and we know not where ;
> To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot, [III : 1]

Leavis rightly draws our attention to what he calls 'the assortment of attitudes towards death'.[5] In fact, *Measure for Measure*, is, in a sense, a dramatization of progress towards self-knowledge under the shadow of death, or rather, more precisely, the fear of death. The Duke who, according to Escalus, 'contended to know himself' (III : 2) emphasizes this fear of death (III : 1) :

> Thy best of rest is sleep,
> And that thou oft provok'st ; yet grossly fear'st
> Thy death, which is no more.
>
> Yet in this life
> Lie hid moe thousand deaths ; yet death we fear.

In the same scene Isabella says :

> The sense of death is most in apprehension.

And Claudio in his break-down pleads :

> The weariest and most loathed worldly life
> That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
> Can lay on nature is a paradise
> To what we fear of death.

Barnardine alone is 'insensible of mortality.' (IV : 2).

V

(*Measure for Measure* has its moments of the tragic mood and its poetry—great poetry—of despair and dejection. But it differs essentially from a Shakespearean tragedy : it has neither a truly tragic issue nor the depth of *Macbeth* or *King Lear*. Chambers writes :

> *Measure for Measure*, whilst it is akin to the tragedies with which it is contemporary, has also a likeness to those 'Romances' with which Shakespeare crowned his work.)
>
> (*Man's Unconquerable Mind*, p. 283)

But in spite of all the emphasis that Chambers, Knight and Leavis lay on its so-called Christian ethics, *Measure for Measure* is fundamentally different from the last plays like *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, in which also wrongs are faced and wrongs are forgiven. Finally, in spite of certain romantic elements, and even though formally it is a comedy, *Measure for Measure* is completely different from Shakespeare's happy romantic comedies—*As You Like It*, for instance. The romantic stuff is, however, emphasized by Chambers :

> Disguise and impersonation and misunderstanding are the very life of romantic comedy. The disguised monarch, who can learn the private affairs of his humblest subject, becomes a sort of earthly Providence, combining omniscience and omnipotence.
>
> (*Op. cit.*, p. 286)

Leavis goes further :

> He, his delegation of authority and his disguise (themselves familiar romantic conventions) are the means by which Shakespeare transforms a comedy into a completely and profoundly serious 'criticism of life'. (*Op. cit.*, p. 169)

Nothing of the kind. We shall see that *Measure for Measure* is very different indeed from the kinds of drama suggested above.

VI

The happy romantic comedies of Shakespeare are instinct with the spirit of the Renaissance—the spirit which Hamlet so eloquently expresses (II : 2) in spite of his melancholy. Here, again, life is presented as an adventure, and love as the motive force of action. Here is enjoy-

ment rather than criticism. The centre of drama, is, however, character —especially the romantic heroine, a harmonious blend of will, emotion and intelligence : one who has an instinctive control over the art of winning happiness and success in life. In a sense, character is destiny in Shakespearean comedy—even as in tragedy.

In all these respects the dark comedies of Shakespeare are very different. The vision of life and man is different. Instead of love we have a very different relation between man and woman—sordid and unwholesome. Women like Isabella and Helena suffer in comparison with the bright heroines like Rosalind and Portia or the tender figures in romances—Perdita and Miranda. Isabella is a somewhat Miltonic character with what Chambers calls 'the ferocity of the martyr'. She changes again and again in course of dramatic action till Shakespeare brings her down to the average level, and she cries : 'O, I will to him and pluck out his eyes !' (IV : 3). In the dark comedy men and women are different : the stuff and vision of life are different. *Measure for Measure* is a comedy only by courtesy.

VII

But *Measure for Measure* is powerful drama. Its painfulness or unpleasantness is part of life and part of the power of the play. The power, however, lies in dramatic moments, not in the structure. In trying to bring about dramatic cohesion Shakespeare employs various devices. On the plane of action substitution is employed as a device—Angelo for the Duke, Mariana for Isabella, Ragozine for Claudio. Shakespeare shows also some skill in combining Claudio-Julia, Angelo-Isabella and Angelo-Mariana episodes. On a deeper level we notice the operation of two forces—what Leavis calls 'the assortment of attitudes towards death', and the problem of the relation between appearance and reality.

It is difficult to agree with Tillyard when he says that the second half of the play is inferior to its first half. In fact, the most defective part is the opening. Scenes 2 and 3 in Act IV offer an extremely interesting situation—very nearly dominated by Barnardine. It will be seen that much of the interest of the situation is bound up with Barnardine who is not, however, essential to the plot. In *All's Well that Ends Well* Parolles says : 'Simply the thing I am shall make me live.' (IV : 3). Here is the secret of the spell of Barnardine, the loathsome and fascinating flower of evil :

> A man that apprehends death no more dreadfully but as a drunken sleep ; careless, reckless, and fearless of what's past, present, or to come ; insensible of mortality, and desperately mortal. [IV : 2]

The situation (IV : 2) is tense enough but the tension of suspense be-

comes unbearable when Angelo sends his message: '... let Claudio be executed by four of the clock ...' The Duke suggests a substitute as a counter-measure: 'Let this Barnardine be this morning executed, and his head borne to Angelo.' And standing under the dim light of the prison, when 'it is almost clear dawn' and 'the unfolding star calls up the shepherd', the worried Friar shows 'the hand and seal', as the great decision is made: 'the return of the duke.' And the Friar chooses to be the Duke in the afternoon.

Then there is a sudden change (IV: 3), and the taut moment relaxes to cause a surprise and to offer even grim fun in spite of suspense: Barnardine firmly refuses to die! He is at first only a growl. Then Pompey whispers: 'He is coming, sir, he is coming; I hear his straw rustle.' And as his straw rustles, like a huge animal in a cage, Barnardine appears—a Barabbas in prison!

Barnardine: I will not consent to die this day, that's certain.
Duke: O, sir, you must: and therefore I beseech you ...
Barnardine: I swear I will not die today for any man's persuasion.
Duke: But hear you—
Barnardine: Not a word: if you have anything to say to me, come to my ward; from thence will not I today. [*Exit*]

Barnardine is a lost soul, 'unfit to live or die', a symbol of corruption and animality—perfect of his kind and therefore fascinating in art. 'Simply the thing I am shall make me live.' Shakespeare likes Barnardine so much that he is allowed to live. Barnardine comes and goes and produces a memorable dramatic moment. But he is not the solution of the problem of the situation. The solution comes in another substitute: Ragozine.

VIII

Aristotle calls a plot 'epeisodic' in which episodes or acts succeed one another without probable or necessary sequence. The plot of *Measure for Measure* is almost 'epeisodic' because of certain very serious deficiencies. The play suffers from a certain lack of clarity of the design. Charlton admits:

> This is not to claim that dramatically Shakespeare's solution is better or even as good as Cinthio's. (*Op. cit.* p. 215)

But Leavis who tries to justify the dramatic art of *Measure for Measure* thinks that the 'complexity of attitudes' is not the same thing as 'conflict or contradiction'. He adds:

> ... the resolution of the plot of *Measure for Measure* is a consummately right and satisfactory fulfilment of the essential design. (*Op. cit.* p. 169)

The two really important points in which Shakespeare differs from

Cinthio are: the social and moral background, and the Duke. The socio-moral emphasis and the invention of the Duke are closely related. Shakespeare had no intention to write a problem play. The socio-moral circumstances were necessary for the creation of the Duke and for providing the scope of his activity. The Duke, again, is necessary for all that is made to happen in the play. When Chambers calls the Duke 'the source of the action of the play,' he is not fully aware of the implications of what he says. The real problem in *Measure for Measure* is neither moral nor social. It is the problem which every artist has to face—finding the right form for his matter: in a sense, broadly speaking, the problem of what Eliot calls 'the objective correlative'.

The socio-moral context gives the play a certain seriousness but it also serves as the pool out of which emerge the Claudio-Julia, Angelo-Isabella and even Angelo-Mariana episodes. By planting the Duke in the social context under normal circumstances Shakespeare could not have the opportunity to present the full series of dramatic moments and intriguing situations. What he wanted was a disguised Duke—a Duke-Friar. This led to the delegation of authority which made it possible for the Duke to watch, while in disguise.

The Duke is the pivot of the play but neither his character nor his action is clear enough. With his departure the play really begins, and we are kept waiting for the solution of the problem. But there is no change in the social set-up when he returns, and the city of Vienna does not in any way promise to be a better place. Shakespeare has not been able to present the Duke as a convincing and consistent character. The Duke who is called 'a scholar, a statesman and a soldier' (III : 2), and yet has 'ever loved life removed' (I : 3) and 'contended especially to know himself' (III : 2) cannot explain convincingly why he allowed corruption to grow and why he delegated authority and yet wanted to watch the trusted man. But did he really trust Angelo? If not, why did he delegate authority to him? Why did he not select Escalus whom he praises so much? One must be fair to Angelo. Authority was thrust upon him. Angelo himself says: 'Let there be some more test made of my metal'. (I : 1) The Duke himself calls Angelo 'a man of stricture and firm abstinence' (I : 3). Escalus says:

> If any in Vienna be of worth
> To undergo such ample grace and honour,
> It is Lord Angelo. [I : 1]

Even Isabella remarks: 'A due sincerity governed his deeds.' (I : 1) And yet the Duke comments:

> Hence shall we see
> If power change purpose, what our seemers be. [I : 3]

The Duke is a Prospero-like figure, and in him we notice something like an identification of the plot with his character. He moves like Pro-

vidence and characterizes himself by providing a series of intriguing situations. But he also takes away much of the interest of the plot because we know that he will direct the action to his desired end. Leavis says:

> His attitude, nothing could be plainer, is meant to be ours—his total attitude, which is the total attitude of the play. (*Op. cit.*, p. 163)

But one of the real problems of the play lies in its failure to establish this identification. Is the Duke's attitude our attitude to what happens in the play? Is not dramatic motivation in Scenes 1 and 3 in the First Act weak, inadequate and unsatisfactory? The character of the Duke, who is the centre of the play, suffers from a lack of the clarity of intention. Consequently, the weak centre fails to hold together the incidents and characters of the play in a credible and convincing sequence.

IX

Commenting on Elizabethan drama Virginia Woolf speaks of

> ... the greatest infliction that Elizabethan drama puts upon us—the plot; the incessant, improbable, almost unintelligible convolutions which presumably gratified the spirit of an excitable and unlettered public ... ('Notes on an Elizabethan Play', *The Common Reader*)

This is largely true. What the Elizabethans or Jacobeans (dramatists or their audience) primarily cared for was a succession of theatrical moments for a large number of characters. But the links between situations or between a situation and a character were in most cases left to take care of themselves. Inadequate motivation or lack of motivation led to all kinds of inconsistency and improbability.

Measure for Measure is neither a problem play nor a thesis play, in the ordinary sense; the socio-moral problem or thesis has been given undue importance. It is a dark comedy because of its gloomy background and grim materials, and a dark comedy can be darker than a tragedy. When Shakespeare read Cinthio's story he at once noticed its dramatic possibilities—in terms of characters and situations. Dramatic exigency explains what happens in the play as a work of art, and if there is any problem in the play, it is one of matter seeking expression in art-form, the problem of 'the objective correlative'. Shakespeare composed hastily, and was probably aware of his weakness, but he knew his audience who never minded motivation so long as they had a quick succession of theatrical moments and characters. In *Measure for Measure* Shakespeare is not a real master of the dramatic art, even though he shows uncommon mastery of dramatic moments.

Measure for Measure is to be studied as 'mingled drama'. Its ending, which, as Spencer points out, is 'awkwardly manoeuvred',[6] makes it a comedy. But, in a sense, it is also an averted tragedy, even as *Romeo*

and Juliet is an averted comedy.[7] No true tragedy can be averted: in *Measure for Measure* there is no inevitableness in the sequence of events. Here, again, the weakness of motivation is clearly noticed. *Measure for Measure* provides, like *Hamlet*, materials for a study in the problem of 'the objective correlative' in drama.

References

1. S. T. Coleridge : Notes on *Shakespeare*.
2. T. S. Eliot : *Murder in the Cathedral*, p. 69.
3. H. B. Charlton : *Shakespearian Comedy*, p. 209; the sentence quoted just below in the text is *ibid*, p. 210.
4. R. W. Battenhouse : '*Measure for Measure*, and the Christian Doctrine of Atonement' (P.M.L.A., December, 1946). The Wilson Knight extract quoted below is from *The Wheel of Fire*, pp. 74-82.
5. F. R. Leavis : *The Common Pursuit*, 'Measure for Measure'.
6. T. Spencer : *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man*, p. 123.
7. P. C. Ghosh : '*Romeo and Juliet*' (Bulletin, Department of English, Calcutta University, Vol. III : 3 & 4, 1962).

(Red-beard) which was the name that the founder of the clan received from the twin-gods Castor and Pollux. Enobarbus was a seasoned professional soldier owing personal loyalty to Antony) who is often addressed as soldier by his betters: e.g.,

II. ii. 112: *Antony.* Thou art a soldier only.

II, vi, 70: *Pompey.* I know thee now; how far'st thou soldier?

IV, v, 4: *Soldier* ... and the soldier/that has this morning left thee.

3. The comments and annotations that I have in mind are the following :

(i) The variety of pointings for line 202 that can be found in F. Rowe, Pope, Knight, Capell, Craig and others : the essential meaning however remains unclouded in all the readings.

(ii) The phrase 'cloth-of-gold of tissue' (line 207) has been given a variety of pointings; here too the essential meaning is not in doubt.

(iii) The construction and the meaning of the phrase 'what they undid, did' (line 213) was amended to 'what they did, undid' by Johnson but rightly defended by Malone and Staunton.

(iv) Coleridge objected to the use of the word 'mermaid' twice within three lines (lines 215-17). But it is a word that does not lend itself to a synonym.

(v) The portion of lines 215-16, 'tended her i'the eyes,/And made their bends adornings' has received a considerable amount of attention as is evident from the Furness Variorum's closely printed five pages and a half, attention justifiably called 'pother' by Ridley in the New Arden edition.

(vi) I should also mention the amusing comment of Steevens on the famous line (line 243) further down in Enobarbus's estimate of Cleopatra, 'Age cannot wither her etc.'. Steevens says, "Such is the praise bestowed by Shakespeare on his heroine; a praise that well deserves the consideration of our female readers." As if the female readers are Shakespearean heroines any more than the male readers are heroes, and as if Cleopatras are common !

4. The phrase is an adaptation of G. Wilson Knight's "The Etenal Femininity waiting for Man", *The Imperial Theme*, p. 297.

5. W. Moelwyn Merchant in *Shakespeare and the Artist*, p. 16, argues that a dramatic point is made solely in visual terms. I think there is room for sonal terms as well. We *see* a play as well as *hear* it.

6. I am not quite sure of the time of the year when the meeting of Antony and Cleopatra took place. Plutarch does not mention any time. I presume it was summer; at any rate, it was not winter although, of course, Egyptian winter is not of the Northern European variety. The use of 'diverse-colour'd fans' indicates summer time.

7. The Sanskrit word "*abhisâr*", also used in Vaishnav love-lyrics of many modern Indian languages (for instance, Bengali, Hindi, Assamese, Oriya), may be explained as the clandestine journey of the beloved to the secret tryst for her lover, despite the difficulty of the road and the risk of being found out; the psychological state involved in *abhisâr* is a passionate longing for union with the beloved at any cost.

8. E. Conze, *Buddhism*, Cassirer, 1960, p. 40. I have borrowed the sentence from a quotation in the *Times Literary Supplement*, March 11, 1965, p. 199.

9. *The Prophetical Writings of Blake*, ed. D. J. Sloss and J. P. R. Wallis, vol. ii, 'Prose from the Rossetti MS', p. 342.

T. S. ELIOT ON SHAKESPEARE

S. N. MITRA

> Le critique est une sentinelle toujours en éveille, sur le qui-vive. Et il ne crie pas seulement hola ! il aide.
>
> —*Sainte-Beuve*

> I can tell nothing from the fact that you enjoy Shakespeare, unless I know *how* you enjoy him.
>
> —*T. S. Eliot*

I

In a recent preface contributed to a paper-back selection of his 'Elizabethan Essays', Eliot repudiated his critical writings on Shakespeare as wrong, immature and almost verging on "impudence". Eliot has, in his later writings, sometimes expressed a mild disapproval of the "pontifical tone" of much of his earlier critical performances. But this preface seems to be something special : the tone is more than apologetic—it is nearer contrition than anything else, not unlike that of the "familiar compound ghost" of his own *Little Gidding*:

> I am not eager to rehearse
> My thought and theory . . . .
> . . . . and pray they be forgiven by others.

Whether the preface was inspired by the "wisdom of humility" or not, it is likely to add to the confusion that already exists regarding his critical approach and attitude to Shakespeare. Largely due to a few unconventional and unpopular opinions expressed in some of his early essays, a kind of mild notoriety for an anti-Shakespearean prejudice came more and more overtly to stick to Eliot's name during the past decades. The reactions of his critics, recorded in closely argued rejoinders, in supercilious asides and even in brusque and temperamental footnotes, kept that notoriety alive, so that, lately, it has become almost customary with serious and accredited Shakespearean scholars to dismiss him as one of the company of distinguished heretics like Voltaire, Tolstoy, and Shaw. And now, on top of all this, Eliot's confession of guilt not only sets his seal on his own alleged critical failure in respect of Shakespeare, but also leaves him open to the charge of another 'recantation' for which some of his critics (and many more who are not

critics) seem to have been breathlessly waiting after what they complacently believed to be his 'recantation' on Milton and Donne.

Yet Eliot, as the entire body of his critical writings indicates, wrote on Shakespeare practically all his life. Even apart from the few pieces which are specifically 'on' Shakespeare (and they constitute a small part of his critical writings), in almost all his major critical pieces, Shakespeare (sometimes along with Dante) invariably receives some critical attention, in one context or another. This life-long preoccupation with Shakespeare, can hardly be reconciled with the image of Eliot sniping at Shakespeare's reputation or with Eliot's own pious apologies, in one of his last testamentary prefaces, in the tone of a converted sinner. The situation is paradoxical and deserves scrutiny. In attempting such a scrutiny the present paper will naturally have a limited objective: it will not concern itself with anything as ambitious as the rehabilitation of Eliot as a Shakespeare critic, nor with defending particular opinions or pronouncements of Eliot against his detractors. It will be confined primarily to an investigation of the nature of Eliot's *critical interest* in Shakespeare and of the *critical use* he made of Shakespeare and his poetry. This will amount to an examination of the consistency and integrity of Eliot's critical theory and practice in the light of his treatment of Shakespeare in his total critical *oeuvre*. Incidentally it may define a point of view from which the current interpretation of Eliot's attitude to Shakespeare as well as his own self-condemning preface may be seen in correct critical perspective.

II

Eliot's reputation as an anti-Shakespearean is founded on a number of unconventional opinions but the most widely publicized among them are his adverse judgment on *Hamlet* and two foot-notes on Rymer *apparently* endorsing the latter's destructive criticism of *Othello*.

The adverse judgment on *Hamlet* is the most unorthodox and, therefore, the most noisily debated of contemporary opinions on *Hamlet*. Eliot's judgment on the play is expressed a trifle too emphatically: 'So far from being Shakespeare's masterpiece, the play is most certainly an artistic failure'.

In his exposition of this alleged failure of *Hamlet*, however, Eliot is certainly not at his best. In the line of argument adopted, Eliot appears to be strongly (and apparently without enough critical discrimination) influenced by two recent works, J. M. Robertson's *The Problem of Hamlet* (1919)—of which the *Hamlet* essay was originally a review—and Ernest Jones's paper, *The Oedipus-Complex as an Explanation of Hamlet's Mystery* (1910). Eliot seems to have swallowed Robertson's 'disintegrationist' hypothesis entire, along with much of Jones's psycho-

analytical paraphernalia—with results not altogether happy, as is borne out by his explanation of the failure of *Hamlet*. He finds the play confused and unrealised as a work of art for two reasons, one textual and the other psychological: (1) Shakespeare's text being a revision of at least two earlier versions, one of which was probably by Kyd, contains some 'intractable' material and unassimilated stuff surviving from the earlier texts. (2) Shakespeare, in the grip of some obscure experience (e.g. Oedipus-complex) of which he himself was not fully conscious, failed to develop and concretely dramatize it in terms of clearly defined motives and actions and successfully impose it on the 'intractable' pre-Shakespearean materials handled by him. In the end, however, it is the psychological part of the argument which got the upper hand and the whole paper came to be pivoted on the diagnosis (*a la* Ernest Jones) that Shakespeare's creative effort was somehow frustrated by an unconscious inhibition which hindered, and ultimately left incomplete, the process of creative transformation, so that the resulting play, in default of objective equivalence, lacks the definition and unequivocal explicitness of the more successful of the Shakespearean tragedies like *Othello*, *Coriolanus* or *Antony and Cleopatra*. For Eliot the presentation of the character of Hamlet himself is symptomatic of the total failure of the play. Due to blurring of motives or the superimposition of several conflicting motives on one another, the character of Hamlet has acquired the kind of tantalizing complexity (the so-called 'mystery') which is fascinating in psychopathic case-histories but is and should be out of place in an objectively developed dramatic action. As a dramatic character, a constituent in a unified whole, Hamlet has not been sufficiently simplified and defined in terms of well-adjusted situations and actions. Thus unlike Laforgue's Hamlet (in the story in *Moralites Legendaires*) who is simply and convincingly an adolescent, Shakespeare's hero remains unfocussed, implying a kind of psychological bafflement which is not only unformulated in dramatic terms but appears to be essentially undramatizable. Eliot makes the following diagnosis: 'Hamlet (the man) is dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible, because it is in *excess* of the facts as they appear. The creature and the creator are then linked up (rather dubiously) by one common diagnosis. Hamlet's bafflement in the play is a projection—and therefore an analogue—of Shakespeare's own bafflement as an artist who seems to have been wrestling with an experience (as obscure as that of the sonnets) which by its very nature 'precluded objective equivalence'. Hence the conclusion that Shakespeare failed because he 'tackled a problem which proved too much for him'.

The conclusion has been challenged by critics but even if we admit that Eliot's judgment that *Hamlet* is 'most certainly an artistic failure' requires formulation in less emphatic terms or terms less involved in

dubious theories, we have still to notice that the judgment is not an isolated and oracular verdict based either on dogmatic rules or subjective impressions. It implies a particular approach to art and a method of discrimination that emerges from a basic assumption of the objective autonomy and impersonality of art, of which a first exposition had been given in section II of 'Tradition and Individual Talent'. In the *Hamlet* essay which should be regarded as ancillary to, or an extension of, that essay, Eliot returns to the paradox of artistic creation which begins with *personal* experience but ends with *impersonal* and *objective* art, and attempts an approximate elucidation of the process by using the formula of 'objective correlative'—a term which has occasioned almost as much criticism as the judgment on *Hamlet* itself. The term, however, is far less portentous than it is usually supposed to be. It has been used by Eliot incidentally, and only once, to indicate how at some unspecified transitional phase of the creative process the purely personal feeling or emotion of the artist is detached from his 'self' and acquires concreteness and objectivity by being merged and identified with 'a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion' before it becomes usable material which the artist can contemplate in detachment *as material* and thus manipulate into the art object. The term only stresses the externalization of psychic material as a necessary precondition to artistic creation. The issue is important and fundamental and Eliot has formulated it in different contexts. In the specific context of drama, for instance, he said, elsewhere:

> 'The essential is to get upon the stage this precise statement of life which is at the same time a point of view, a world—a world which the author's mind subjected to a complete process of simplification.'
> ('The Possibility of Poetic Drama,' *The Sacred Wood*, p. 68)

When related to this particular aesthetic issue explored by Eliot, the deficiency of *Hamlet* which he noted and tried to pin-point appears in a broader critical perspective: *Hamlet* negatively illustrates the 'objective-impersonal' postulate while positive illustrations are provided by *Othello*, *Coriolanus*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *The Divine Comedy*. The essay remains suggestive primarily because of its exploratory character; its evaluative and polemical rôle is only secondary and is meant to expose more than the deficiency of a single play by Shakespeare: it is a covert attack on that dangerously persuasive and side-tracking trend in Shakespeare criticism in general and in *Hamlet* criticism in particular, which started in the nineteenth century with Goethe, Hazlitt and Coleridge and culminated in Bradley—the criticism of drama solely in terms of characters, sometimes even simply of the protagonists, isolated from the framework of the drama. By giving primacy to characters, this school of criticism not only obscured the totality of the drama but also, by stimulating perverse ingenuities in character-interpretation, it tended to

replace the characters themselves by the critic's own fancies about them. In his mild rejoinder to his critics on the present issue, what Eliot considered worth stressing is not the infallibility of his opinion on *Hamlet* but the relevance of the criticism it implied of a wrong and uncritical method:

> 'I do not think it any derogation to suggest that Shakespeare did not always succeed: such a suggestion would imply a narrow view of success. His success must always be reckoned in understanding of what he attempted; and I believe that to admit his partial failure is to approach the recognition of his real greatness more closely than to hold that he was always granted plenary inspiration'.
>
> (*The Use of Poetry etc.* p. 44)

Eliot's foot-notes on Rymer and the critical comments they have provoked constitute a minor but equally crucial case of confusion and misunderstanding due almost entirely to the inability or refusal of his critics to relate them to his basic ideas and pronouncements. Eliot's critics read these foot-notes in isolation from his other critical writings and stumble into a naïve misinterpretation unflattering both to Eliot and to themselves. The following are the disturbing foot-notes:

(i) I have never, by the way, seen a cogent refutation of Rymer's objections to *Othello*.

('Hamlet and His Problems', *The Sacred Wood*, p. 96.)

(ii) ... Rymer makes out a very good case.

('Four Elizabethan Dramatists', *Selected Essays*, p. 116)

The foot-notes, often taken to imply, in the words of Clifford Leech, 'a semi-surreptitious good word for Rymer (*Shakespeare's Tragedies*, p. 96) whom Macaulay had branded as 'the worst critic in the world', are not entirely free of the Old Possum touch of intriguing obliquity and the contexts in which they occur are also somewhat complicated—specially the first where Eliot quotes with approval E. E. Stoll's opinion that seventeenth and eighteenth century critics are 'nearer in spirit to Shakespeare' than critics of the school of Bradley, yet when Eliot's critics jumped to the conclusion that Eliot approved of Rymer's *A Short View of Tragedy* as a piece of sound Shakespeare criticism, they did not see that such an approval could be reconciled neither with Eliot's general critical principles nor with his recorded assessment of English critics and critical periods. Eliot's admiration for Dryden and Johnson as critics (although he had reservations about both) is well-known but he never mentioned Rymer anywhere as even moderately commendable, either for his ideas or for his method. As a matter of fact, *A Short View* seems to be the most typical example of criticism vitiated by dogmatism and extra-literary bias as expounded by Eliot himself in his 'Imperfect Critics'. If that is not enough, we have only to turn to the short historical sketch 'From Dryden to Coleridge' which Eliot contributed to *A Companion to*

Shakespeare Studies, ed. by Granville-Barker and G. B. Harrison. There Eliot describes Shakespeare criticism after Ben Jonson as an arid waste-land with only Dryden and Johnson as the two oases. In between them, however, is Thomas Rymer on whom Eliot's explicit comment is as follows:

> Thomas Rymer was a man of considerable learning, and not destitute of taste, when he left his taste to take care of itself; but a false theory of what drama should be, of what he *ought* to like, came very near to paralysing that function altogether, and made him the butt of his own and subsequent times.

In the light of this specific statement—besides the general drift of his ideas and opinions—the interpretation usually foisted on the foot-notes and the arguments by which it is often justified appear not only doubtful but also forced. Helen Gardner, for instance, in her essay on 'The Noble Moor' (*Shakespeare Criticism*, 1935-60, p. 350), has argued that since Eliot had never seen 'a cogent refutation of Thomas Rymer's objections to *Othello*, he 'must have found some cogency in Rymer's attack'. The fallacy is elementary: the absence of cogency in the refutation does not necessarily imply its presence in what is to be refuted, nor does it necessarily suggest that the latter is irrefutable. Similarly, the second foot-note, 'Rymer makes out a very good case', is usually taken to mean that Rymer has *proved* his case against Shakespeare. Once again the obvious and elementary distinction between making a case and establishing a truth is missed or ignored. Eliot found no cogent *refutation* of Rymer because it had been customary since the Romantic Revival to dismiss him unceremoniously (Macaulay is representative here) as devoid of imagination and insight and totally impervious to poetry. This amounts to a kind of critical evasion rather than a refutation. As a critic Rymer's equipment was not at fault, nor, strictly speaking, his performance: he was derailed altogether, as Eliot pointed out, by his 'false theory of what the drama should be'. It was his major premise, his basic aesthetic assumption, that was wrong. He believed that the stage should be 'our school of good manners', that the drama should conform to Aristotelian 'rules', on the one hand, and satisfy our sense of probability and decorum, on the other, and that the end of tragedy should be to 'show virtue in triumph' (*A Short View*). Granted this premise, Shakespeare can hardly be defended. Rymer's case is not unlike that of William Archer, the apostle of modern realism, in his onslaught on Elizabethan drama in *The Old Drama and the New* (discussed by Eliot in 'Four Elizabethan Dramatists' in which the second foot-note on Rymer occurs) and the two linked together (not by accident) in the same essay, may be said to be sailing in the same boat. Rymer indeed makes as good a case against *Othello* as Archer does against Elizabethan drama in general but both are wrong and precisely for the same reason: they confuse between art

and life and seek to measure the one by the criteria of the other. Rymer did not understand any more than Archer did, that 'the difference between art and the event is always absolute' and that the first principle of artistic creation, in the words of Eliot himself, is that

> 'On the one hand actual life is always the material and on the other hand an abstraction from actual life is a necessary condition to the creation of a work of art'. (*Selected Essays*, p. 111)

L. C. Knights seems to have missed the point entirely when, in an irascible foot-note (*Explorations*, p. 7), he declared that 'a point by point refutation (of Rymer's thesis) is possible but hardly necessary'. The cogent refutation which Eliot had in mind is not necessarily a point by point refutation: Eliot meant it to be simply an exposition of the error of Rymer's basic assumption on the nature of the drama.

Thus so far from endorsing Rymer's critique on *Othello*, Eliot in his foot-notes was merely pointing at the initial and basic mistake of Rymer which reduced his otherwise formidable performance to sheer absurdity.

III

The scrutiny, in the preceding section, of the two 'unpopular' opinions of Eliot indicates how essential it is to consider Eliot's opinions and pronouncements in the light of the concepts and principles which he enunciated as critical instruments and, at the same time, how confusing they can be if they are considered in insolation. It appears that the so-called 'heresy' of Eliot is at least partly a myth created and popularized by critics who refused to take the trouble of making certain necessary connections. Yet Eliot has stressed the inter-dependence of theory and practice and the futility of each in isolation from the other or if the other is weak or vulnerable. He has mentioned two theoretical limits of criticism:

> 'at one end of which we answer the question 'what is poetry?' and at the other 'is this a good poem?'

In the same context Eliot added: 'To ask 'what is poetry?' is to posit the critical function'. (*The Use of Poetry*, pp. 16, 20). An important part of the critic's business, therefore, is to consolidate his aesthetic foundation: he does so not by adopting a number of convenient recipes, whether devised by himself or borrowed from elsewhere, but by analyzing and generalizing his own authentic experience of art 'to the point of principle and definition' (*The Sacred Wood*, p. 11) and then again, by testing their soundness and adequacy on particular artists or works of art. Eliot himself never shirked this part of the critic's job but what is really remarkable, in the present context, is that he repeatedly turned to Shakespeare for this kind of clarification and testing of his basic aesthetic assumptions and principles. The *Hamlet* essay, as I have tried

to show in the preceding section, has an importance over and above the absolute correctness or error of the judgment (supposing either to be ascertainable with any degree of certitude): the importance lies in its relevance to the fundamental aesthetic issue which Eliot was exploring through the play. A similar and, in a sense, much more crucial instance is provided by the Shakespeare Association lecture of 1927, entitled 'Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca'. The importance of this essay, not merely for Shakespeare criticism but for modern aesthetic investigation in general, cannot be too emphasized. The core of this paper is Eliot's examination of (and solution to) the problem of the relation of poetry to thought and belief. The question how far the artist's commitment to particular philosophical attitudes or beliefs can be legitimately inferred from or read into poetry or art constitutes an issue of great importance for modern poetry as it has been raised in a crucial form by the work of such poets as Rilke, Yeats and Eliot himself and has exercised many an inquiring mind of the present century. In 'Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca Eliot tackles the problem from his own particular aesthetic position with special and detailed reference to Shakespeare (along with Dante) who clarifies the issues and illustrates the conclusions.

Eliot's main thesis is that poetry 'is not a substitute for philosophy or theology or religion' (this, in opposition as much to Wyndham Lewis and Middleton Murry as to Matthew Arnold) and that it should not be confused with any of these. Poetry may often incorporate thoughts, may even be pivoted on them but, unless they are assimilated into the stuff of the poet's *experience*, they have no independent existence in poetry. Poets merely make use of ideas irrespective of their character or quality in order to express some permanent human impulse. The distinction, therefore. between philosophical poets and emotional poets, between poets who 'think' and those who do not, is a fortuitous one, for, as Eliot said, 'the poet who thinks is merely the poet who can express the emotional equivalent of his thought'. Shakespeare and Dante, presenting a contrast between themselves, together illustrate the point. Dante's poetry is supported by the great philosophical system of Aquinas while Shakespeare's had nothing behind it except 'the mixed and muddled scepticism of the Renaissance', derived from such heterogenous sources as Montaigne, Machiavelli and Seneca.

> In truth neither Shakespeare nor Dante did any real thinking—that was not their job; and the relative value of the thought current at their time, the material enforced upon each to use as vehicle of his feeling, is of no importance. It does not make Dante a greater poet, or mean that we can learn more from Dante than from Shakespeare. We can learn more from Aquinas than from Seneca, but that is quite a different matter.
>
> ('Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca') *Selected Essays*, p. 136.

Meanwhile Dante's line

la sua voluntade e nostra pace

which has the great philosophy of Aquinas behind it is as great poetry as Shakespeare's

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods
They kill us for their sport

which has only Seneca to support it. Both are great as poetry because each in its own way makes the idea, whatever its intrinsic worth, express in perfect language a basic human experience.

The question of belief and attitude is bound up with that of thought. The issue was to be taken up again in the essay on 'Dante' (1929). Eliot reiterates his view that while belief is not altogether irrelevant, poetry *as poetry* has its own autonomy. Belief of some kind is certainly involved but it is 'belief as felt' rather than 'belief as held' and, furthermore, it need not necessarily be the belief of the poet in real life. As Eliot himself explains :

> I doubt whether belief proper enters into the activity of a great poet, *qua* poet . . . The poet makes poetry, the metaphysician makes metaphysics, the bee makes honey, the spider secretes a filament ; you can hardly say that any of these agents believes: he merely does.
>
> (*Ibid*, p. 138)

Poetry is the result of a process of assimilation and transformation and Shakespeare, who is described as a 'finer instrument for transformations than any of his contemporaries, finer perhaps than Dante', provides a crucial illustration to the kind of creative exploitation of thoughts and beliefs which the making of poetry involves. Eliot said:

> I cannot see in Shakespeare either a deliberate scepticism as of Montaigne, or a deliberate cynicism, as of Machiavelli, or a deliberate resignation, as of Seneca. I can see that he *used* all of these things for dramatic ends.
>
> (*Ibid*, p. 134)

Seneca's influence on Shakespeare, thus, amounts to no more than what Shakespeare, along with his contemporaries like Chapman, Webster and Marston, derived from him for stage purposes. The chief derivative was an interpretation of Senecan stoicism as 'the refuge for the individual in an indifferent or hostile world too big for him'. It inspired and sustained a particular attitude of conscious self-dramatization which was exploited in a variety of ways by many of the Elizabethan dramatists. It is most impressively illustrated by some of Shakespeare's own tragic heroes like Othello, Coriolanus, and Antony who, in extremity, take refuge into their egotism by invoking some theatrical and idealized image of themselves. Othello's last great speech is the most revealing illustration of this. Eliot's comment on the speech is singularly penetrating and suggestive:

> What Othello seems to me to be doing in making this speech is *cheering himself up*. He is endeavouring to escape reality, he has ceased to think about Desdemona, and is thinking about himself. Humility is the most difficult of all virtues to achieve; nothing dies harder than desire to think well of oneself. Othello succeeds in turning himself into a pathetic figure, by adopting an *aesthetic* rather than a moral attitude, dramatizing himself against his environment. He takes in the spectator, but the human motive is primarily to take in himself. (*Ibiid*, pp. 130-131).

Critics have often objected to Othello's self-dramatization in the last speech being described as 'cheering himself up', as if the expression is meant to be a sarcastic summing up of the total content of the Shakespearean tragedy itself. The expression—and indeed the whole passage quoted—defines the ambiguous attitude of the hero (implying the co-existence of uncommon strength and appalling weakness) crystallizing into a melodramatic gesture—that of clinging desperately to his own past—which *expresses* a distinctive phase or feature of his tragedy. The pointed accuracy of Eliot's comment clearly comes out when we set off the last moment of Othello (as Eliot himself does in the essay) with that of Doctor Faustus who projects a tragic vision different from Shakespeare's. Marlowe's hero clings neither to the past nor the future but is absorbed in the present, in the realization of his impending ruin.

Shakespeare made dramatic use of Seneca, just as he made use of Montaigne and Machiavelli but the point which Eliot makes is that he is not necessarily a Senecan Stoic any more than he is a sceptic like Montaigne or a cynic like Machiavelli. He is a poet 'occupied with turning human actions to poetry'. The whole paper which is meant, as Eliot himself wittily explains, 'to disinfect the Senecan Shakespeare before he appears', achieves two specific objectives: in the first place, it explodes one variety of erratic Shakespeare-criticism which seeks to glamorize or contemporize him by squeezing him somehow into the straight-jacket of a particular brand of philosophy or faith or creed, and, secondly, it reaffirms one of Eliot's own basic postulates: 'When we are considering poetry we must consider it primarily as poetry and not another thing'. (Preface to *The Sacred Wood*).

IV

Eliot distinguished criticism from two kinds of literary performances often confused with it—scholarship which is ancillary to criticism and is often its helpful ally, and interpretation which (whatever its utility) is really a substitute for criticism. True criticism, says Eliot in *The Sacred Wood* (p. 15), is 'a development of sensibility, organizing perceptions into impersonal principles and judgments. The critic's interest is

essentially 'a creative interest, a focus upon the immediate future' (*ibid*, p. 37). A part of his business, therefore, is 'to maintain tradition' by bringing the 'forces of the past' to bear on the solution of contemporary problems.

Eliot's constant preoccupation with Shakespeare, in one context or another, becomes intelligible and significant in the light of this conception of criticism as a creative mediation between the past and the future. For him Shakespeare is not simply the greatest of English poets, an isolated phenomenon whose superiority or uniqueness is all that is required to be stressed or lauded. 'No poet or artist', as Eliot said, 'has his complete meaning alone', least of all Shakespeare who represents a triumphant phase of the English poetic tradition. He studied what Shakespeare received from the past as his working capital, what he made of it in the successive phases of his own development, and what he passed on to his successors. His inheritance consisted of a loose five-act dramatic structure, a crude verse-form which was just growing into importance as dramatic medium, and an unbalanced though vivid speech-habit based on rhetoric and slang. Eliot's interest was not so much in Shakespeare, the 'wonder bard', as in *what* he made of his heritage and *how*.

Shakespeare, like Dante, was extremely fortunate in inheriting a crude but traditional form which was capable of indefinite refinement, so that he did not have to waste his talent, as the Romantic and Victorian poets had to, in forging minor and personal forms. He retained the five-act structure and the heterogeneous content of Elizabethan drama but he elaborated the one and refined the other. Thus without changing the over-all character of the Elizabethan dramatic structure Shakespeare made it more complex and subtle.

But it was his handling of the blank verse as a dramatic medium which Eliot considered technically significant and worth studying in details. Shakespeare took it over at the point where it had just been rescued from the mechanical monotony of *Gorboduc* and Kyd by the genius of Marlowe. Marlowe had purified it by an infusion of Spenserian music in *Tamburlaine* and later, at least in the last scene of *Doctor Faustus*, had introduced a new dramatic intensity in the verse-structure by breaking up the line according to colloquial speech-rhythm. Shakespeare's early blank verse was naturally influenced by Marlowe but during the first fifteen years of the seventeenth century its development was mostly the achievement of Shakespeare who elaborated the pre-Marlovian monotone into a complex structure of harmony. Eliot divides this development into two periods and points out the particular *character* of each:

> During the first, he was slowly adapting his form to colloquial speech: so that by the time he wrote *Antony and Cleopatra* he had

devised a medium in which everything that any dramatic character might have to say, whether high or low, 'poetical' or 'prosaic', could be said with naturalness and beauty . . . The late Shakespeare is occupied with the other task of the poet—that of experimenting to see how elaborate, how complicated, the music could be made without losing touch with colloquial speech altogether, and without the characters ceasing to be human beings. This is the poet of *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Pericles* and *The Tempest*.

('The Music of Poetry', *Of Poetry and Poets*, pp. 35-36).

Shakespeare solved one of the crucial problems of poetic drama, that of the *verse as speech*, in a way which Eliot found permanently suggestive for later practitioners :

The stiffness, the artificiality, the poetic decoration, of his early verse has finally given place to a simplification to the language of natural speech, and this language of conversation again raised to great poetry, and to great poetry which is essentially dramatic.

(Note to 'Poetry and Drama', *ibid*, p. 88.)

We have only to supplement the above statements on Shakespeare's verse by the analysis and brief commentary on the opening scene of *Hamlet* in 'Poetry and Drama' (*On Poetry and Poets*, pp. 75-77) where Eliot offers an illuminating practical demonstration of the immense tonal range and rhythmic variations possible in blank verse as developed by Shakespeare in his mature phase. Among Shakespeare's contemporaries and successors a few produced personal variations in rhythm which are technically interesting. Ben Jonson, for instance, is definitely un-Shakespearean: he adapted the verse of Marlowe but made it 'more deliberate. more mature' without Marlowe's inspiration. Webster, Tourneur and Ford derived their blank verse, along with much else, from Shakespeare but each added something personal to it. Middleton was a master of versification but showed no significant development, while Marston and Massinger were just mediocre and managed to maintain an average level of competence, thus demonstrating the sustaining power of a verse-form which had been slowly matured by a whole generation, but mostly by the genius of Shakespeare. The later history of blank verse, as traced by Eliot, is one of slow decline until, with the erection of 'the Chinese wall' of Milton, it 'suffered not arrest, but retrogression'.

Eliot's interest in Shakespeare's language is part of his general preoccupation with language as a medium and creative instrument for poets. In such early essays as 'Rhetoric and Poetic Drama' and 'Seneca in Elizabethan Translations', Eliot began his exploration of the Elizabethan poetic language in terms of its complex origin under the simultaneous influences of popular and classical (mostly rhetorical and Senecan) traditions. The strength as well as the weakness of both these traditions were naturally transmitted to the language which Shakespeare developed but,

at its best, it acquired an enormous functional efficiency as a highly sensitized instrument registering the total sensibility of the age. Eliot observes:

> Examination of the development of Elizabethan drama shows this progrress in adaptation, a development from monotony to variety, a progressive refinement in the perception of the variations of feeling, and a progressive elaboration of the means of expressing these variations. ('Rhetoric and Poetic Drama', *Selected Essays*, p. 38)

Shakespeare's is the major contribution to this development in which 'rhetoric' plays an essentially creative rôle so that in spite of 'bombasts' this language succeeds in effecting a subtle and vital adjustment between sensibility and words, 'Sensation became word and word was sensation'. What this language gained was an unprecedented vitality and expressiveness exhibiting, at its best, in Shakespeare, Chapman, Middleton and Donne

> 'that perpetual slight alteration of language, words perpetually juxtaposed in new and sudden combinations, meanings *eigenschachtelt* into meanings, which evidences a very high development of the senses, a development of the English language which we have perhaps never equalled'. ('Philip Massinger', *Selected Essays*, p. 209)

By virtue of these 'surprising combination of words', where meanings merged into meanings, Shakespeare's language acquired a new depth and ambience of suggestion and evocative power which the English language, as a poetic medium, never attained either before or after him. The later history of the poetic language is one of progressive specialization at the hands of Dryden and Milton, in consequence of which it tended more and more to concentrate exclusively on particular properties of language while others, equally important for its wholeness, began to wither away. The rift between sensibility and language widened until, in the late eighteenth century, the language of Gray and Collins shows the clarity of extreme sophistication, but 'the sophistication remains only in the language', and 'has disappeared from feeling'. The imbalance was further precipitated by the idiosyncrasies of poets throughout the nineteenth century and in the early decades of the twentieth, the language became so devitalized by journalistic and academic *cliches* that it could hardly be used again as a creative medium, as Eliot said in his essay on 'The Metaphysical Poets', without 'forcing' or 'dislocating' it into 'meaning'.

In studying Shakespeare's language, however, Eliot was not blind to its negative side: it gained enormously in exuberant life and expressiveness but it also lost considerably in order and stability. Dante here presents a contrast:

> Dante seems to me to have a place in Italian literature—which, in this respect, only Shakespeare has in ours; that is, they give body to the soul of the language, conforming themselves, the one more and

the other less consciously, to what they divined to be its possibilities. And Shakespeare himself takes liberties which only his genius justifies; liberties which Dante, with an equal genius, does not take.

('Dante', *Selected Prose*, ed. Hayward, p. 100)

Through the particular investigations of verse, language and structure, Eliot arrived at an overall assessment of the Shakespearean poetic drama. He accepted it as a valid, multi-dimensional form:

In a play of Shakespeare you get several levels of significance. For the simplest auditors there is the plot, for the more thoughtful the character and conflict of character, for the more literary the words and phrasing, and for auditors of greater sensitiveness and understanding a meaning which reveals itself slowly.

(*The Use of Poetry*, p. 153)

Eliot found it a great form uniting, according to his own ideal, great poetry with popular diversion; but he also noticed its patent weakness —its lack of structural simplicity and concentration which it betrays when compared with such alternative forms of poetic drama as those of the Greek, the medieval moralities like *Everyman* and the contemporary drama of Racine and Corneille. Eliot has discussed some of the weak points of the form in the contexts of 'comic relief' (the mixture of *genres* decried by purists like Sidney), the chaotic abundance of characters and episodes, the flagrant violation and confusion of basic and useful dramatic conventions like the 'unities' (commended by Eliot not as 'rules' but as a technical means to order and concentration), which the form survived, and, sometimes, transcended by its sheer vitality. But nevertheless the form remained loose, unbalanced and eccentric, showing how much scope there still was for further elimination and simplification for the sake of a more austere and more closely integrated structure. Shakespeare, in common with his contemporaries, seems to have sacrificed formal purity to variety and realism—'the great vice', as Eliot pointed out, 'of English drama from Kyd to Galsworthy'.

Eliot's scrutiny of Shakespeare's language, verse and dramatic structure has a double bearing on his own critical objective and procedure. In the first place, the scrutiny was directly motivated by his 'creative interest' in contemporary poetry and poetic drama, and, as such, it helped him to broadbase and define his theoretical ideal and to clarify his practical problems regarding what was to be sought and attempted as essential or good and what avoided as erratic or futile. Secondly, the scrutiny of Shakespeare supplied him with a standard of comparison and contrast which he applied with remarkable delicacy and insight, not for dogmatic value-judgment, but in order to bring out or 'isolate' individual and essential qualities of poetry or of any of its constituents or features, which, according to his own conception, constituted 'the critical labour'. By tacitly placing Shakespeare at the

centre of the Elizabethan-Jacobean literary situation, Eliot set up a Shakespearean standard of technical accomplishment in terms of which he studied the dramatists and classified them into several distinct groups: (i) those who were independent of Shakespeare and yet had something positive to contribute, e.g., Marlowe, Jonson and Chapman; (ii) those who *developed* from Shakespeare, e.g., Middleton, Webster, Tourneur and Ford; (iii) those who were under the direct *influence* of Shakespeare, e.g., Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger and Shirley; (iv) 'Independent minors' like Marston who could neither learn from Shakespeare nor could contribute anything new to the common pool. All these represent partial or fragmentary developments which are intelligible as leading up to or deriving from Shakespeare and they become *significant* only in the light of Shakespeare's own fuller development.

Besides particular aspects or elements of his poetry the totality of Shakespeare's work itself constitutes a standard—that of 'a continuous development' culminating in a complete 'pattern'. The vision projected by this pattern is comparable with that of only one poet in Europe—Dante. Eliot has constantly set these two poets side by side; the 'patterns' of the two poets are not alike, they are different but complementary:

> Shakespeare gives the greatest width of human passion; Dante the greatest altitude and the greatest depth. ('Dante', *Selected Essays*, p. 265).

Besides Shakespeare and Dante there is no third in European poetry.

V

In the preface mentioned at the outset Eliot said that 'for the understanding of Shakespeare a life-time is not too long', that 'the development of one's opinions (of Shakespeare) may be the measure of one's development in wisdom'. This is probably true of one's understanding of anything and of one's opinion of anybody, especially of one's understanding and opinion are viewed in the light of Eliot's own philosophical meditation on time and experience and their shifting and illusory character *sub specie aeternitatis*:

> The knowledge implies a pattern, and falsifies,
> For the pattern is new in every moment
> And every moment is a new and shocking
> Valuation of all we have been.

In the context of literary criticism, however, the remarks are, to say the least, unfocussed, especially if they are at all meant to define a point of view from which his criticism of Shakespeare could be judged

as wrong or immature and requiring revision. In fact, apart from using a more or less conventional language of vague adulation about Shakespeare, the preface does not specify the implied 'development' of Eliot's 'opinions' on Shakespeare, far less does it indicate the grounds for the modification of any of his opinions. Moreover, since criticism, for Eliot, is not the dogmatic fixation of values, in absolute terms, for an ideal literary market, the modification of particular opinions, by itself, need not affect the character or significance of his critical writings on Shakespeare: they constitute more than a set of 'opinions' and represent a method of inquiry leading to particular perceptions and insights relevant to developments for the present and for the immediate future.

The real significance of Eliot's preoccupation with Shakespeare lies in the fact that he has studied him not as 'consecrated by time', but as 'beyond time', as part of his *immediate* experience of living poetry in which the past and the future are implicit. It embodies an attitude which is obviously as remote from 'debunking' as from the kind of idolatry which inspired Matthew Arnold's well-known line 'Others abide our question, thou art free'. It is a *critical* approach sharply distinguished from all varieties of specialized inquiries and scholarly interests as also from sentimental and pseudo-creative fancies (often disguised as 'interpretations'). The emphasis is neither on facts nor on simple enjoyment or appreciation, but on the reorganization of both for the sake of perceptions and discriminations. 'I can tell nothing', says Eliot in the preface to *The Wheel of Fire*, 'from the fact that you enjoy Shakespeare, unless I know exactly *how* you enjoy him'. The emphasized 'how' cryptically sums up all that Eliot has said about the purpose, method and limits of criticism. These are principles which condition, and are demonstrated by, his scrutiny of Shakespeare. On account of this complete integrity Eliot—almost alone among contemporary critics professing particular theoretical ideals and practical programmes—has succeeded in fulfilling his critical obligation to the achievement of Shakespeare. And that is also why his critical writings on Shakespeare act as a corrective to a variety of contemporary specialized investigations—such as those into the imagery, myths, symbols, etc., in Shakespeare—which are often carried too far when they use Shakespeare as a pretext for ingenuity not directly relevant to literary criticism. Against such excesses and confusions Eliot, like Sainte-Beuve's 'sentinel on the watch-tower', has warned us in one of his basic postulates which I have already quoted earlier: 'When we are considering poetry we must consider it primarily as poetry and not another thing.'

SHAKESPEARE AND MACHIAVELLI

SUBHA MITTER

I

FOR the student of English literature, the terms 'Machiavellian' and 'Machiavellianism' or 'Machiavellism' have a connotation different from that which would be accepted by students of Political Science. When, Niccolo Machiavelli wrote his *Il Prince* consisting of methods to "liberate Italy from the Barbarians", he little dreamt that within the next fifty years, his name would become a byword on the English stage. Machiavelli wrote for his times; his morals were of his age and class, and his knowledge of fellow-men was derived from the courts and ante-chambers of unscrupulous princes and seignieurs who controlled the destinies of Italy during those turbulent years. From the point of view of posterity, it was unfortunate that Machiavelli selected the ruthless Cesare Borgia as his model Prince. In Machiavelli's opinion, autocratic rule such as Borgia's was what Italy needed in her critical hour to throw off the yoke of foreign rule, but Borgia brought with him a sinister flavour of crime, poison and murder, which Machiavelli had not intended to extol directly, but which seemed to have his tacit approval.

Though *The Prince* was by no means Machiavelli's last word on politics and history,—there were also his *Discourses, Florentine History* and *Art of War*—its unusual sentiments eclipsed all else. His thinking was foreign to medieval standards. His autocratic ruler who attained his position by sheer cunning and force of arms, implied a rejection of the medieval conception of ranking or 'degree'. Further, he placed politics outside the realm of morality, by stating that good and evil were not applicable to state-craft. Posterity remembers the dictum—"the end justifies the means"—overlooking the fact that he was not just referring to any end, but to a specific one, the unity of his beloved state, and its welfare.

The Prince was published in 1532, five years after its author's death, and probably would not have been so misinterpreted had not a French Huguenot, Innocent Gentillet, anonymously published in 1576 the *Discours sur les moyens de bein gouvernor et maintenir en boune paix un Royaume en autre Principanti* . . . which came to be popularly known as the *Contre-Machiavel* or the *Anti-Machiavel*. In it Gentllet

succeeded in accusing Machiavelli of every conceivable crime, including the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. This book was offered as an antidote to the poison of Machiavellian doctrines, but ultimately its effects were more disastrous.

The English had the benefit of reading an almost contemporary translation of Gentillet's *Discours* published by Simon Patericke under the title of *A Discourse upon the means of well-governing a kingdom against Nicholas Machiavell the Florentine* (Trans. 1577, pr. 1608). It has been a point of dispute whether or not Gentillet and Patericke were wholly responsible for the introduction of Machiavellian ideas into Elizabethan life and literature.

Edward Meyer in *Machiavelli and Renaissance Drama* (Berlin 1897) and Wyndham Lewis in *The Lion and the Fox* (1927) contend that it was from Gentillet and Patericke that most of the Elizabethan dramatists derived their notion of Machiavelli. Mario Praz on the other hand, (*Machiavelli and the Elizabethans* 1928) has shown by reference to Scottish ballads and folk-poetry of 1568-72, that the Machiavelli legend had first found its way to Scotland and the Scottish reformers, before Gentillet's translation. This view is supported by F. P. Wilson (*Elizabethan and Jacobean*, 1945), on the ground that Elizabethans could learn about the real Machiavelli direct from the original editions of the *Discourses* and *The Prince* printed in London in 1584.

There is some truth in the opinions of both schools. It is true that Machiavelli was well-known in Court and University circles, possibly in manuscript and early editions, but Gentillet and Patericke did much to popularize the distorted estimate of Machiavelli, and hence to provide most of the sensational traits of the Machiavellian stage-villain. Whether Machiavelli made his *debut* by means of a direct translation, or an oblique attack, he had definitely come to stay and to influence English literature, particularly its drama, for the next half-century.

Machiavellianism in its general and political sense, deals with certain fundamental, though perhaps unlovable, traits in human nature which, if acknowledged, are too disturbing to the conscience. Therefore it was prudent to heap ignominy on the unpalatable truth, and to associate Machiavellianism with all that was unscrupulous, dark and underhand. The theatre-goer of Elizabethan and Jacobean times saw the Machiavellian in this ugly aspect.

Renaissance Italy provides ample evidence of poison, murder, fraud and violence. Certainly such crimes were not unknown in English life, or in early plays like *Gorboduc* and *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, but Machiavelli was seen as an inventor and innovator of such tendencies. In his *Prince*, he had advocated perfidy only to meet perfidy, but the stage-Machiavellian was born with a perfidious nature.

The Florentine Secretary had made use of the term 'policy' in comparatively harmless, political contexts, yet on the stage the dramatist used it as he thought fit, laying the blame always on Machiavelli. 'Policy' came to imply ambition, fraud, deceit, hypocrisy, and in this sense, Barabas, Mortimer, Richard III, Edmund. Iago and Bosola, are all 'politicians'. It has been mentioned earlier that Machiavelli's choice of Cesare Borgia as a ruler worthy of emulation, was taken as an exhortation to kill and betray, to be without faith, pity and religion. The Elizabethan villains destroyed what stood in the way of their schemes and ambitions, the Jacobean villains destroyed from the sheer joy of destruction.

Ever since Rome had placed all Machiavelli's works on its 'prohibited' list in 1552, and the Council of Trent had ordered their total destruction, the name of Machiavelli came to be associated with atheism, and gradually became almost synonymous with Old Nick, the Devil. Machiavelli's unusual interpretation of the Scriptures and open criticism of some of the practices of the Church, would not raise him in its estimation. And there were Gentillet and Patericke to add unnecessary fuel to the already smouldering fire of Machiavellianism. Their voices resounded louder on the English stage than the measured tones of Machiavelli. Machiavelli was transformed into the Machiavel whose notorious statement in the Prologue to *The Jew of Malta* goes thus:

> I count religion but a childish toy,
> And hold there is no sin but ignorance,

Not only did Machiavellian villains pride themselves on irreligious deeds and atheistic sentiments, but they died blaspheming and cursing as Machiavelli was supposed to have done. The legend persisted though he actually died fortified by the rites of the Church. This was how Machiavellianism came to the English stage. Truly, one could ruefully comment with Villari, Machiavelli's great biographer, "Never was there less a Machiavellian than Machiavelli".

In the course of travelling away from Machiavelli, English dramatists embellished him further with characteristics of Senecan tyrants and villains, and of the Vice of the native medieval tradition. The Seneca they knew was the "English Seneca read by candlelight", full of horror and sensation and sententious statements. Seneca's tyrants seem to have been the early predecessors of the Machiavellian character as far as their ideas about ambition and power are concerned. Needless to say, they poison and kill and boast of their prowess. Since their deeds or misdeeds were very similar, it was natural that in the minds of the dramatists these two ideas should fuse together to mould the character of the 'Senecchavellian villain' (a very appropriate title given by A. P. Rossiter in *English Drama from Early Times to Elizabethans*, 1950).

There was also plenty of native English blood in the 'Seneca-villians'. Their English ancestors were Herod of the Mystery Plays and the Vice of the Morality Plays. Irving Ribner[1] finds the Machiavel of Marlowe's Prologue, only a veneer, a topical label for the Father of Lies. In such Morality plays as *Conflict of Conscience*, Satan calls forth his lieutenants Hypocrisy, Avarice and Tyranny, just as Machiavel prepares us for his Viceroy, Barabas, the Jew of Malta. Bernard Spivack too[2], has very ably pointed out that in the second half of *The Jew of Malta*, Marlowe resorts to the popular effectiveness of the older dramaturgy and Barabas becomes the Vice, sharing the rôle with Ithamore.

After such transformations, the 'Machiavellian' ends up as a thoroughly immoral, bad and shocking character. This Machiavellian would shock Machiavelli himself! Most of the villains of Marlowe, Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, Marston, Webster and Tourneur, possess some, if not all, of these traits. The Machiavellian element in Shakespeare is found in his villains—Richard III, Iago, Aaron and Edmund—and is seen scattered throughout his history plays and in most of his tragedies. The Shakespearean villains mentioned above seem to spring from the stock and their utterances smack so much of Machiavellian policy that it is not possible to doubt that Shakespeare, at least for theatrical purposes, made use of the contemporary conception of the Machiavellian stage-character. He has little sympathy for those who sacrifice the weal of the realm for their selfish interests, the disturbers of peace, the law-breakers. It is as if he says that such men do exist in society, but they are definitely anti-social; their craft and ambition may disturb society for a while, but sooner or later they will bring down destruction upon themselves, and the world will resume its normal course. John F. Danby in *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature*, making a detailed study of Shakespeare's attitude to Machiavellianism, finds him coming to terms with the times and the New Men, then reverting to the medieval position. Danby goes to the length of seeing in Prince Hal 'the Machiavel of Goodness', a postulate which ignores the inherent ethical conservatism of Shakespeare, though we fully agree that the problem of the Machiavellian posed a real dilemma which obsessed Shakespeare for fifteen years. Shakespeare's imaginative sympathy falls clearly on the side of traditional law and order, and this distinguishes him rather markedly from the Marlowe-Webster-Tourneur line.

II

Shakespeare first deals with the Machiavellian type of character and action in his History plays, though it is incorrect to state that he introduced the Machiavellian element into them. The Chronicles, which

were his sources for this class of plays, were written by realistic men. who thought it prudent and expedient to support the idea of any strong authority which could ensure a stable government such as the Tudors had given. They were not very sympathetic towards weak rulers, no matter how saintly they were. Though the Tudors wished historians and chroniclers to speak well of their own genealogy and claims to the throne of England, they would not tolerate any rebellious thoughts against the State. Conveniently, they were medieval enough to equate rebellion against the State with Sin against God, and to hold up Lucifer as the example of the arch-rebel. Homilies and treatises repeatedly emphasized the notion of 'degree', and prophesied dire consequences for those who stepped out of the hierarchy or wrongfully usurped positions; an example can be found in John Cheke's *Hurt of Sedition*. Shakespeare's well-known pronouncement on 'degree' in *Troilus and Cressida*, places him once for all on the side of order and stability, and time and again his version deviates from his sources as he causes the forces of good to triumph over those who would disturb the established order and bring about chaos. Despite their deficiencies and weaknesses, our sympathies are more with Henry VI and Richard II than with those who promise to give the country stronger rule by unfair means.

In 3 *Henry VI*., we are introduced to Richard, Duke of Gloucester, between whom and 'the golden time', there are many rightful claimants and insurmountable obstacles, but he is not to be deterred by this:

> Why, I can smile and murder whiles I smile,
> And cry 'Content' to that which grieves my heart,
> And wet my cheeks with artificial tears,
> And wet my face to all occasions.
> ... ...
> I can add colours to a chameleon,
> Change shapes with Proteus for advantages,
> And set the murderous Machiavel to school.
> Can I do this, and cannot get a crown?
> Tut, were it further off, I'll pluck it down.
> (3 *Henry VI*, III, ii).

He is the supreme egoist—"Richard loves Richard; that is I as I," (V, iii) who uses others to serve his own ends (I, iii) and finally slaughters those "that were the means to help him". (V, iii). The sanctimonious Richard habitually swears by 'St. Paul', even when he wishes to see Hastings's head before dinner. In the presence of the citizens of London he appears with a prayer-book, flanked by a bishop on either side, to impress the people by his piety. Yet in a typical aside he tells us:

> But then I sigh; and with a piece of Scripture.
> Tell them that God bids us do good for evil:
> And thus I clothe my naked villainy

With old odd ends stolen out of holy writ:
And seem a saint when most I play the devil.
(*Richard III*, I, iii).

Richard has never had any illusions about himself; his soliloquies and asides are full of self-revelation, e.g. :

I am a villain; yet I lie I am not,
... ...
My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a separate tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain.
Perjury, perjury in the highest degree;
Murder, stern murder in the direst degree,
Throng to the bar, crying all 'Guilty! Guilty!'
(*Richard III*, V, iii).

From beginning to end Richard remains a villain. bold, daring and resolute, untramelled by any qualms of conscience, using any means to further his ends, a most accurate delineation of the Machiavellian-cum-Senecan villain.

A study of a similar dyed-in-the-wool villain is made in *Titus Andronicus* in the person of Aaron, the Moor. Aaron is bent on the pursuit of evil; an entirely black-visaged and black-hearted character.

Let fools do good, and fair men call for grace,
Aaron will have his soul black his face.
(*Titus Andr.* III, i)

He has the typically aspiring mind:

Then, Aaron. arm thy heart and fit thy thoughts
To mount aloft with thy imperial mistress. (II, i)

He delights in villainy:

O, how this villainy
Doth fat me with the very thought of it!" (III, i)
... ...
Tut, I have done a thousand dreadful things
As willingly as one would kill a fly;
And nothing grieves me heartily indeed
But that I cannot do ten thousand more. (V, i)

As a matter of fact, Richard's and Aaron's speeches could very well be interchanged, without making much difference to the play or the character. Their actual differences in deeds arise only from their different environments and circumstances. True to the tradition of the stage-machiavel, Aaron believes in no god, and dies unrepentant, rather, repenting of any good he may have inadvertently committed. In Richard III and Aaron, Shakespeare has presented two outright villains, who retain many of the traits of the Vice. They are in the tradition of Barabas and Ithamore. Their crimes seem to be too improbable to be

true; their malevolent speeches have an unnatural, ranting quality. In Richard, it is true, Shakespeare could not, and has not, deviated from the cold facts of history. The total monstrous effect has been produced by high-lighting certain traits, e.g. the physical deformity which takes as its corollary moral depravity, and the total dedication to evil from inclination rather than necessity. The unnaturally born physical monster turns into the inhuman political monster, presenting a striking contrast to the temperate, law-abiding and law-giving, Henry Richmond, the first Tudor ruler, who picked up the crown from under the rose-bush at an opportune moment.

III

After this, particularly in the History plays, Shakespeare's Machiavellians are more 'politicians' than villains. They are prompted by necessity and expediency, troubled by conscience and remorse. Shakespeare discards the fantastic figure of the pseudo—or stage—Machiavel, and concerns himself seriously with the problems of state-craft which troubled Machiavelli. His solution is not the same, but he makes room for the dilemmas, temptations and necessities of state. His rulers and advisers have redeeming features, and are found in every society in the shape of ambitious, crafty and hypocritical men. Such men were numerous in the England of Shakespeare's day—the Leicesters, the Walsinghams and the Cecils, giving crafty counsel to their crafty Queen who did not need such counsel.

Early in *Richard II*, we are introduced to such a 'politician'—Bolingbroke. Mowbray, before going into exile, utters the first timely warning about him:

> But what thou art, God, thou, and I do know;
> And all too soon, I fear, the king shall rue. (I, iii).

Bolingbroke's comment on his own exile, sounds ominous by its boldness and bitterness:

> How long a time lies in one little word!
> Four lagging winters and four wanton springs
> End in a word: such is the breath of kings. (I, iii)

Richard himself, despite all his vagueness and ineffectiveness, has noted:

> .....his courtship to the common people;
> How he did seem to dive into their hearts
> With humble and familiar courtesy. (I, iv).

From the moment that Bolingbroke returns to England, his one aim is to win the people over to his side by courteous speeches, ostensibly frank and artless. Such courtesy is extended to Henry Percy, Ross and Willoughby, and the Duke of York. Like Machiavelli's Prince, the usurper attempts to show his quarrel as just. As events progress in his

favour, he continues to profess allegiance to Richard while doing his best to depose him. At the point of actual deposition, Bolingbroke remains in the background, while Northumberland is left to play the active rôle. Bolingbroke must still reveal himself as the unwilling successor to the throne of an unworthy king. Every move on his part is calculated, every word duly weighed, every smile bestowed where it will do most good. Bolingbroke is hypocritical and deceitful, and above all crafty. Taking no one into his confidence, he does not soliloquize or speak in 'asides'. As a lonely secretive figure, he ascends the throne as King Henry IV, and dies suspicious to the last, even of his own son.

Both parts of *Henry IV* deal with 'policy'—the 'policy' of the King himself, and of the 'politicians' and courtiers such as Worcester and Northumberland. The hot-headed and hot-blooded Hotspur is out of place in this world of cautious, slow-moving men. In his anger he repeatedly inveighs against the 'subtle king', 'the vile politician Bolingbroke', 'this fawning greyhound', 'the cozener', who

> by this face,
> This seeming brow of justice did win
> The hearts of all that he did angle for. (IV, iii)

King Henry IV has not changed very much from Bolingbroke the usurper, except that he has become more cunning and cautious, belying the hopes and betraying the trust of his former followers and supporters. As King, Henry IV grows introspective and self-concentrated. Now as he has attained his desire, he has time to think back, and look ahead. Neither prospect pleases him very much, and kingship itself tastes sour. Like all Machiavellians, he has no illusions about others or himself, though he has succeeded in gulling the world. But even this, he knows, is not for long. The secretive Bolingbroke now takes the audience, his courtiers, and his sons. into his confidence and in scene after scene, analyzes his motives and his aspirations and reveals the means by which he secured his ends, e.g. his prescription for popularity—

> By being seldom seen, I could not stir
> But like a comet I was wondered at;
> ... ...
> And then I stole all courtesy from heaven,
> And dressed myself in such humility,
> That I did pluck allegiance from men's hearts
> ... ...
> Thus did I keep my person fresh and rare,
> My presence like a robe pontifical,
> Ne'er seen but wonder'd at, and so my state,
> Seldom but sumptious, showed like a feast,
> And won by rareness such solemnity.....
> (1 *Henry* IV, III, i)

In '2 *Henry IV*,' the sands of time are running out for the King and it seems that

> He cannot long hold out these pangs.
> Th' incessant care and labour of his mind
> Hath wrought the mure that should confine it in
> So thin that life looks through, and will break out.
> (2 *Henry IV*, IV, iv)

Lying in bed, or walking in his night-gown, stricken by the pangs of conscience and remorse, he laments,

> O God! that one might read the book of fate,
> And see the revolution of the times.... (2 *Henry IV*, III, i)

No one knows better than himself,

> By what by-paths and indirect crooked ways
> I met this crown; and myself know full well
> How troublesome it sat upon my head.... (2 *Henry IV*, IV, v)

It is natural that such a person should constantly be on the alert, suspiciously weighing up friends and foes alike, forestalling any attempt at treachery, leaving a few words of wisdom, hard-earned through bitter experience spoken to his son,

> And all my friends, which thou must make thy friends,
> Have but their stings and teeth newly ta'en out;
> By whose fell working I was first advanc'd,
> And by whose power I well might lodge a fear
> To be again displac'd: which to avoid,
> I cut them off; had a purpose now
> To lead out many to the Holy Land,
> Lest rest and lying still might make them look
> Too near unto my state... (IV, v)

Eternal vigilance doubt and suspicion seem to be the price exacted for attaining a throne by unlawful means. This is by no means a happy Machiavellian; there is no longer heard the laughter of the Vice or the rodomontade of the Senecan tyrant. All is introspection and retrospection. A constant fear of one's shadow and a desire to escape from the memories which cry, "Guilty! Guilty!" Therefore, Henry IV's last piece of advice to his son is,

> Therefore, my Harry,
> Be it thy course to busy giddy minds
> With foreign quarrels: that action, hence borne out,
> May waste the memory of former days.

And in fact the young King, prompted by dignitaries of the Church, for their own Machiavellian ends, acts up to this hint at the beginning of *Henry V*.

For long Henry V has been looked upon as Shakespeare's portrayal of the 'ideal king'. If one remembered his past in *Henry IV*, one could

excuse it on the grounds that he was a 'reformed' character, repenting his misdeeds and sincerely willing to make reparation. But recent criticism has picked many holes in his shining armour, and has gone to the other extreme of classing him with Shakespeare's 'machiavels', even if it be as a 'machiavel of goodness'.[3] Plenty of material for this contention is provided by Henry's cold-blooded and cool-headed rejection of Falstaff, his sacrifice of personal inclinations and relationships, his detachment from human involvements revealed early in his career:

I know you all, and will awhile uphold
The unyok'd humour of your idleness. . . .
(1 *Henry* IV, I, ii)

It is true that Henry does not always behave in an 'ideal' manner, and definitely bows to necessity and expediency when occasion demands. He is capable of cool thought and cool action, and not stirred to warmth and emotion, except in moments of crisis. His detractors admit his charm, only to align him with other attractive Machiavellians such as Falconbridge, Edmund and Macbeth. But the fact that these machiavels had charm, does not argue that all charming men are machiavels. Henry's single-minded preparation for kingship, not allowing any obstacle to come in his way, has also been considered as a Machiavellian trait, but a truer estimate finds that "Hal learns the lesson, that the world of the natural, the temporary, and the world of the political and traditional, must both be experienced."[4]

It may be concluded that Shakespeare approves of Henry V, without approving of the Machiavel. As a stamp of approval all the disintegrating factors die away—usurpation, rebellion, anarchy, riot and licence. Prince Hal attains the stature of a monarch in a new world and new dispensation. The throne has been attained rightfully by a man who impartially dispenses justice and places the good of his people above all considerations. He has learnt to balance personal and political interests, the ideals of honour and chivalry with more practical concerns. Henry V realizes the reponsibilities of kingship in all humility and without the bitterness characteristic of his father:

Upon the King! Let us our lives, our souls,
Our debts, our careful wives,
Our children and our sins, lay on the King!
We must bear all. O hard condition,
Twin-born with greatness. (*Henry* V, IV, i)

Unmachiavel-like Henry believes in sin, punishment and redemption, and that sins of the fathers are visited on the children. Unlawful usurpation remains a sin in the eyes of God, even if one's father is the usurper:

Not to-day, O Lord,
O, not to-day, think not upon the fault

My father made in compassing the crown!
I Richard's body have interred anew.
(*Henry V*, IV, i).

Faith in Divinity sustains Henry from first to last, and there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of his prayer—"O God of battles, steel my soldier's hearts"—or his thanksgiving, when that prayer is answered —"Praised be God, and not our strength for it!"

IV

One has to step out of line of Shakespeare's two great tetralogies of English historical plays and revert to the dates 1596/97 to study another 'politic' character—Falconbridge in *King John*. The play was written after *Richard II* and elaborates the same themes of usurpation, rebellion and kingship. Its distinctive feature lies in Shakespeare's handling of the character of Falconbridge the Bastard, well-versed in the ways of the world and not averse to adopting its standards, yet, when all is said and done, England's saviour, imbued with a strong sense of duty, and stirred by a genuine love of the country. Some critics have seen in Falconbridge a rough sketch of the later Henry V as he takes over the leadership of the country in its most critical hour after John hands over to him "the ordering of the present time". He has the largest portion of integrity in a society which has none, and the power of looking through the shams and pretensions to the ugliness lying below. His illegitimacy and gaiety of spirit link him with Edmund, while he also continues the line of Richard III—"I am I, howe'er I was begot"—"a mounting spirit"—"to deliver, Sweet, sweet, sweet poison for the age's tooth". In true Machiavellian fashion he persuades England and France to be

Friends awhile, and both conjointly bend,
Your sharpest deeds of malice on this town.

He comments:

How like you this wild counsel, mighty states?
Smacks it not something of policy? (*King John* II, i)

Yet he can rise above all other considerations to proclaim:

This England never did, nor never shall,
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror. (V. vii)

And he bends all his efforts to this end. The politician-patriot has the ordering of events for a while and acquits himself well.

Falconbridge is able to play this high rôle due to his frankness with himself and others, and his sincerity of purpose. It is true that he has early appreciated

That smooth-faced gentleman, tickling commodity
Commodity, the bias of the world . . .

but he is not the only one to do so in a play in which Commodity is the hall-mark of all characters. His experience and lack of illusions serve him in good stead as he strips his contemporaries of their pretensions one after another. Certainly he is the best-equipped to do so. His final comment, "Mad world ! and kings ! mad composition !" lends him the same detachment as was possessed by Henry V. He is of the world and yet out of it, and very far from the Machiavellianism which was being popularly vended. If Machiavellianism at all, it was the Machiavellianism of Machiavelli.

The rôle of the traditional Machiavellian in this play has been given to another of those powerful priests and 'holy' men who have often precipitated tragedy by their equivocations and double-dealings. Cardinal Pandulph, the Papal Legate, is very much of a 'politician', realizing that

> A sceptre snatch'd with an unruly hand
> Must be as boisterously maintain'd as gain'd;
> And he that stands upon a slippery place
> Makes nice of no vile hole to stay him up.
>
> (*King John* III, iv)

Compared to him, the Dauphin, Louis, is a novice in politics:

> How green you are, and fresh in this old world!
> John lays you plots; the times conspire with you. (III, iv)

In order to save his throne, John submits to Pandulph only to find betrayal and deception. On the other hand, it is Falconbridge who defies Pandulph and all that he stands for, demonstrating quite clearly that though he is a worldly-wise and practical man, he has no truck with tricky 'politicians' who place self-interest above all other considerations. Pandulph's attempts to use his spiritual and moral authority to serve political ends are effectively exposed in his own words:

> It was my breath that blew this tempest up,
> Upon your stubborn usage of the Pope;
> But since you are a gentle convertite,
> My tongue shall hush again this storm of war. (V, i)

Somewhat like the Vice of the Moralities, Pandulph is almost hooted off the stage, having been rejected by all the rulers in the play.

King John has effectively proved that the disciples of Commodity can be different breeds and show many faces. Falconbridge knows Commodity and uses it to fight Commodity and strip it of all pretensions. He stands apart from the Machiavellians and self-interested schemers by using his practical and political knowledge for the higher interests of state and society. When expediency reaches this level it ceases to be expediency and becomes a means of honourable and effective conduct. This type of 'political man' was to reach perfection in the person of Henry V.

After *Henry V* Shakespeare did not write any play purely preoccupied with man in his political aspect. He had fully explored the implications of the relationship between man and the state, ruler and ruled. In his Tragedies much wider and deeper worlds were to be encompassed, issues more fundamental to the human race were probed into; in these plays, Shakespeare demonstrated that there were aspects of character other than the political and social, regions where man walked alone and faced his Maker. Even in these high and lonely places, there would be the lawless ones, the Machiavellians and 'politic' men, to thwart the forces of goodness, to whisper unholy counsel into willing ears, but values would no longer be solely political and after all the upheavals in the spiritual and mundane worlds, after all the tragic and dark moments, order, sanity and love, would ultimately prevail and restore the balance. The Machiavelli type was a necessary experiment towards the final values.

V

Shakespeare's Iago reveals certain features which set him apart from the stock stage-villain. In him we see a slight change in the egotistical declaration of Machiavellian principles. Iago's "I am not what I am", reveals him to be a hypocrite and dissembler:

> Not I for love and duty,
> But seeming so for my own peculiar end. (I, i)

By all accounts he is considered honest, and manages to dupe his victims almost to the very end. Othello believes that "Iago is most honest", (II, iii), "Full of love and honesty" (III, ii). His seeming sympathy for Cassio moves Desdemona to say, "O, that's an honest fellow" (III, iii), while Cassio has never known a Florentine more "kind and honest" (III, i). Iago uses this mask of honesty to further his own vindictive purposes—

> The Moor is of a free and open nature,
> That thinks men honest that but seem to be so;
> And will as tenderly be led by the nose
> As asses are.
>
> (*Othello*, I, iii)

> So will I turn her virtues into pitch;
> And out of her own goodness make the net
> That shall enmesh them all.
>
> (II, iii)

> Cassio's a proper man; let me see now;
> To get his place and to plume up by will
> Is double knavery.
>
> (I, iii).

The one thought that runs through his mind is, "I hate the Moor", but instead of committing a rash and impulsive act, he is willing to bide his time and conform to 'necessity'.

For necessity of present life,
I must show out a flag and show of love,
Which is indeed but sign. (I, i)

His destructive bent of mind feels no greater pleasure than to see his victims helpless in the toils of his machinations and in words of high poetry he gloats in triumph:

Not poppy, nor mandragora,
Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,
Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
Which thou owd'st yesterday.
(III, iii).

Iago is the smiling villain of the Renaissance, diabolical in cleverness, unrelenting in revenge. Since his vengeance is not prompted by any one of the obvious motives of jealousy, envy or ambition, his malignity has been considered 'motiveless'. Perhaps it is an amalgam of all negative passions, an epitome of all that is evil, opposed to all that is good.

Russell Fraser in *Shakespeare's Poetics* comments on Iago's comparative taciturnity and the 'impression it creates of a knowing of evil.' In place of the final maledictions and oaths hurled by stage-Machiavels, Iago faces his accusers with the challenge,

Demand me nothing: what you know, you know:
From this time forth, I never will speak word.
(V, ii).

Iago is undoubtedly a villain, but an unusual and individualized one, not a mere replica of the traditional Machiavel. This fits him for the rôle he has to play in a tragedy of no ordinary dimensions in which the characters go far beyond mere types or imitations.

Edmund in *King Lear* is an illegitimate son like Falconbridge but has no regrets on that score:

'Tut, I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardising'. (I, ii)

This is another variation on the theme of the egoist. Edmund's lawlessness and willingness to upset the ordered state of things is emphasized:

Thou nature art my goddess; to thy law
My services are bound. Wherefore should I
Stand in the plague of custom. (I, ii)

Like his predecessors in villainy, Richard III, Aaron and Iago, Edmund is a cynical opportunist—

Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit;
All with me's meet that I can fashion fit.
(III, iii).

Men of his type are rarely troubled by feelings of guilt; all is fair game:

That which my father loses,—no less than all
The younger rises when the old doth fall. (III, iii).

But in his dying moments, Edmund attains a new stature and dignity, and takes leave of the world with the words, "The wheel has come full circle: I am here" (V, iii). A spark of goodness shines in him, not appropriate to the Machiavellian villain:

Some good I mean to do,
Despite of mine own nature. (V. iii)

His last belated efforts to this end have been found unconvincing by some critics, but they are there, perhaps to enhance the final tragedy of Cordelia.

In *King Lear*, Edmund is not the only villain. There are the monstrous daughters, Goneril and Regan, and the unsatisfactory Cornwall, knowing no redemption from their vices till the last. But ultimately this is a tragedy of Lear and Cordelia and all else pales into insignificance. The forces of disorder were let loose for a while but finally love and goodness triumph even after paying the supreme price, and order is restored. Edmund realized this and attempted to forsake the path of 'nature' for a higher service.

Macbeth, the regicide, who is also responsible for the deaths of Banquo, Lady Macduff and her son, is a villain, but an imaginative, conscience-stricken one, plunging further into despair as he wades deeper in blood. After a time his ambition ceases to be an important trait of character and point of interest; a desperate compulsion drives him on:

I am in blood
Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more
Returning were as tedious as go o'er. (III, iv)

The impression created is that without the persuasions and planning of Lady Macbeth, and the supernatural solicitations of the witches, Macbeth might have acted less the villain.

In the early stages of the play, while his action is still only imaginary, he seems to be resolute enough in his course of action—

The Prince of Cumberland!
That is a step
On which I must fall down, or else o'er leap,
For in my way it lies. (I, iv)

But Lady Macbeth knows better and has no illusion about his nature which is "too full of the milk of human kindness". It is she who would chastise with the valour of her tongue all that impedes him from the 'golden round'; it is she who must remind him, "To beguile the time, Look like the time".

In spite of all her efforts, Macbeth's resolution has already begun to falter—"If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well/It were done quickly". Soon after he tells his wife, "We will proceed no further in this business", but is shamed out of his resolve by her scathing comments. So at last he is brought to the point where he can say:

I am settled and bend up
Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.
Away, and mock the time with fairest show:
False face must hide what the false heart doth know. (I, vii)

Thus far we gather that Macbeth seems to feel, and his wife makes him feel, that it is the proper thing for him to go on being ambitious; but at heart he would rather not; and all this is even before the murder is committed. After the deed, it is no Machiavellian who asks: "But wherefore could I not pronounce 'Amen'? and "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood/Clean from my hand?" From now onwards, there is no peace of mind for Macbeth. He is speaking from his heart when he says:

Had I but lived an hour before this chance
I had lived a blessed time; for from this instant
There's nothing serious in mortality;
All is but toys: renown and grace is dead. (II, ii)

It is no longer the stage-villain but the tragic hero who says,

I have lived long enough: my way of life
Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf. (V, iii)

In Shakespeare's plays disillusionment always follows regicide. Such disillusionment reaches its height in the glorious poetry of "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player". The prophecies of the witches, the influence of Lady Macbeth, the unusual atmosphere, serve to complicate the situation in the play, so that it is not easy to regard Macbeth as a study in pure villainy, and less as a study in pure Machiavellian villainy.

A similar development can be traced in the earlier tragedy of *Hamlet* in the person of Claudius, possessed of 'wicked wits' and 'traitorous gifts', guilty of fratricide and regicide at one and the same time. It is true that Claudius can present a better face to the world than Macbeth, and has greater command over his emotions, but when alone, his reactions to the heinous crime that he has committed, are the same:

O my offence is rank, it smells to heaven;
It hath the primal eldest curse upon't—
A brother's murder! Pray can I not,
Though inclination be as sharp as will. (III, iii)

But his efforts at prayer are in vain:

My words fly up, my thoughts remain below.
Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

Hamlet has indeed caught "the conscience of the King"; henceforth, Claudius tries ruse after ruse to get rid of Hamlet always taking good care that it should look like 'accident'. To make assurance doubly sure, the poisoned foils "have a back or second" of the poisoned drink. When Claudius dies, Laertes's only comment is,

He is justly served:
It is a poison tempered by himself. (V, ii)

Claudius is caught in the diabolical 'mouse-trap' he had laid for Hamlet. He is full of guile and smooth speeches, with all the makings of a consummate villain, but once again we feel that after his first heinous crime there was no retreat for him. He had to silence the step-son who suspected too much. There is no joy in his villainy, but guilt and compulsion. All that he had wished to gain, "my crown, mine own ambition, and my queen", have turned sour, and in his last desperate bid, he has to sit and watch the Queen drink the poison, being able to utter only the feeble protest, "Gertrude, do not drink".

As late as 1609-10, when writing *Cymbeline*, Shakespeare presented another 'Italian fiend' in the shape of Iachimo. But though Iachimo tries to follow in the footsteps of Iago and weaves a tissue of lies and intrigue which leads to tragic consequences, his motive seems to be no other than 'scruple' at Posthumus's praise of Imogen, leading to a wager with pieces of gold and a ring. His villainy is thus described:

Mine Italian brain
'Gan in your duller Britain to operate
Most vilely—for my vantage excellent;
And, to be brief, my practice so prevail'd
That I returned with similar proof enough
To make the noble Leonatus mad. (V, v)

Iachimo seems to possess only the superficial traits of the Italian intriguer and very little of the ruthless, ambitious Machiavellian. He remains "a slight thing of Italy". (V, v)

VI

In all his delineations of the Machiavellian character, Shakespeare shows himself to be always on the other side—the side of law, order, legitimacy. Those who tried to upset this order through ambition, revenge or self-love, could only enjoy a brief and temporary success, and were inevitably doomed. In Shakespeare's history plays, the message is the same as in *Gorboduc* or *The Misfortunes of Arthur*. There is a very evident fear of civil war and of the horrors which arise out of a disputed succession; unlawful usurpation is frowned at. To those who would disturb the peace, there is no quarter shown:

Abate the edge of traitors, gracious Lord,
That would reduce those bloody days again,

And make poor England weep in streams of blood!
Let them not live to taste this land's increase
That would this treason wound this fair land's peace!
Now civil wounds are stopp'd, peace lives again—
That she may long live here, God say amen!
(*Richard III*, V, v)

Shakespeare first demonstrated the evils of Machiavellianism in his early history plays, in the persons of intriguing royalty, nobles and prelates. But he did not stop there; his vision of the evil disruptive forces of the world persisted through the great tragedies to his last plays, and quite a proportion of this evil is exemplified in characters with Machiavellian traits. At no time was Shakespeare enamoured of Machiavellian or pseudo-Machiavellian thought, yet at the same time, his exploration of the system and his delineation of that type of character, proved his awareness of the dangers of such attitudes. In his own way he did his best to counteract the evils of such a pattern of life and thought, condemned in no uncertain terms in his Sonnet 124:

If my dear love were but the child of state,
It might for Fortune's bastard be unfather'd,
As subject to Time's love or to Time's hate,
Weeds among weeds, or flowers with flowers gather'd.
No, it was builded far from accident;
It suffers not in smiling pomp, nor falls
Under the blow of thralled discontent,
Whereto th' inviting time our fashion calls.
It fears not Policy, that heretic,
Which works on leases of short-numb'red hours,
But all alone stands hugely politic,
That it nor grows with heat nor drowns with show'rs.
To this I witness call the fools of time,
Which die for goodness, who have liv'd for crime.

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TRAGIC CONFLICT IN SHAKESPEARE : its background in Christian Scholasticism

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I

As a part of a wider scheme of studying the medieval basis of the tragic pattern in Shakespeare, the present essay aims at considering the influence of scholastic philosophy, especially the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, on the Shakespearean idea of tragic conflict. For a medieval source of the tragic view of life, one can go to either Boethius or St. Thomas Aquinas. The Boethius-view governs the writings of Lydgate (*The Fall of Princes*), Sackville (*The Mirror for Magistrates*) and some Elizabethan tragedies (e.g., the early tragedies of Shakespeare). The impress of Thomism is found in several Elizabethan works, particularly in the mature tragedies of Shakespeare.

What was the Thomist view of tragic conflict? Thomas follows Aristotle, and defines good as "that which is desirable" (*Summa*. I. v. 6). Beauty is a form of good ; it is that which pleases when seen. Why does it please? Through the proportion and harmony of parts in an organized whole. Intellect is subject to will in so far as desire can determine the direction of thought ; but will is subject to the intellect in so far as our desires are determined by the way we conceive things, by the opinions we have of them : "the good as understood moves the will." Freedom lies not really in the will, which is "necessarily moved" by the understanding of the matter as presented by the intellect, but in the judgment (*arbitrium*) ; therefore, freedom varies directly with knowledge, reason, wisdom, with the capacity of the intellect to present a true picture of the situation to the will ; only the wise are really free. Intelligence is not only the last and the highest, it is also the most powerful of the faculties of the soul. "Of all the human pursuits, the pursuit of wisdom is the most perfect, the most sublime, the most profitable, the most delightful."[1] "The proper operation of man is to understand."[2]

The proper end of man, therefore, is in this life the acquisition of truth, and, in after-life, to see this Truth in God, not in bodily pleasures. nor in honours or wealth or power, nor even in actions of moral virtue, though all of these may give delight. In *Summa Theo-*

logica, Q. 77, Art. 4, Aquinas writes, "The proper and direct cause of sin is to be considered on the part of the adherence to a mutable good; in which respect, every sinful act proceeds from inordinate desire for some temporal good. Now the fact that anyone desires a temporal good inordinately, is due to the fact that he loves himself inordinately." Man is a creature full of passions and emotions. The question is not whether God could have made creatures not mutable; mutability is as co-essential with the nature of a contingent being, as immutability is in the case of the necessary Being. When the question of moral evil arises, this principle is to be applied to the case of a free being created by God out of nothing.

Ethics prepare men to attain happiness. Moral goodness, virtue, may be defined as conduct conducive to the true end of man, which is to see God. Man naturally inclines to the good. the desirable, but what he judges to be good is not always morally good. Through Eve's false judgment of the good, man disobeyed God, and now bears in every generation the taint of that first sin. If at this point one asks why God who foresees all should have created a man and a woman, destined to such curiosity, and a race destined to such heritable guilt, Thomas would assume in reply that it is metaphysically impossible for any creature to be perfect, and that man's freedom to sin is the price he must pay for his freedom of choice. Without that freedom of will, man would be an automaton not beyond but below good and evil, having no greater dignity than a machine. So the world of St. Thomas presents us with the spectacle of mutable man struggling with mutable good to reach immutable values. For St. Thomas, the solution is essentially Christian. Shakespearean tragedy reached an identical position, adopting an approach that is fundamentally Thomist.

In *Summa Theologica* (First Part of the Second Part) Q. 77, Art. 1, Thomas discusses among the causes of sin, the passions. He is answering the question as to how it is that the will, which is the rational appetite, can be moved by desire, or sensitive appetite. "For the Philosopher says (*De Anima*. iii. text 57) that the rational appetite moves the sensitive appetite, even as, in the heavenly bodies, one sphere moves another. Therefore, the will cannot be moved by a passion of the sensitive appetite." Thomas disagrees with the Philosopher, and quotes from Daniel xiii. 56: "Lust hath perverted thy heart." He says that though a passion of the sensitive appetite cannot draw or move the will directly, it can yet do so indirectly. First, by a kind of distraction: since all the soul's powers are rooted in the one essence of the soul, it follows that when one power is intent in its act, another power becomes remiss or is even impeded in its act; on the contrary, through being centred on one thing, it is less able to be directed to several things. Also, in the operations of the soul, a certain attention is requisite, and

if this be closely fixed on one thing, less attention is given to another. In this way, by a kind of distraction, when the movement of the sensitive appetite is enforced in respect of any passion whatever, the proper movement of the rational appetite or will must, of necessity, become remiss or altogether impeded." Should we be in error if we suggest that this is precisely Shakespeare's problem in *Hamlet*? His horror at his mother's incestuous relation with his uncle has blunted the edge of Hamlet's reason. The situation is Thomist.

St. Thomas continues the section. "Secondly, this may happen on the part of the will's object, which is good apprehended by reason. Because the judgment and apprehension of reason is impeded on account of a vehement and inordinate apprehension of the imagination and judgment of the estimative power, as appears in those who are out of their mind. Now it is evident that the apprehension of the imagination and the judgement of the estimative power follow the passion of the sensitive appetite, even as the verdict of the taste follows the disposition of the tongue: for which reason we observe that those who are in some kind of passion, do not easily turn their imagination away from the objects of their emotion, the result being that the judgment of the reason often follows the passion of the sensitive appetite, and consequently the will's movement follows it also, since it has a natural inclination always to follow the judgment of the reason." This too reads like a scholastic exposition of Othello's tragic problem.

The spectacle of man, who is a slave to passions, and suffers tragically is thus essentially Thomist. The Thomist analysis of the enslavement of men, when in passion, is comprehensive enough to include its different forms of manifestation in Shakespearean tragedy. In *Summa Theologica* (Q. 77, Art. 2), St. Thomas discusses the different forms of infirmities of man in passion.

"First, by way of distraction, as explained above. Secondly, by way of opposition, because a passion often inclines to something contrary to what man knows in general. Thirdly, by way of bodily transmutation, the result of which is that the reason is somehow fettered so as not to exercise its act freely . . . when the passions are very intense, man loses the use of reason altogether; for many have gone out of their minds through excess of love or anger. It is in this way that passion draws the reason to judge in particular, against the knowledge which it has in general. . . . Hence passion fetters the reason, . . . so that while the passion lasts, the reason argues and concludes under the second." (Q. 77, Art. 3). King Lear speaks of reason being overwhelmed by strong passion. In the storm scene, the King says, "When the mind's free the body's delicate; this tempest in my mind Doth from my senses take all feeling else" (III, iv. 11-13). This, we may suggest, is the Shakespearean version of the Thomist position.

St. Thomas carefully distinguishes between involuntary passions, which entirely excuse from sin and voluntary passions, which do not excuse entirely. "Accordingly therefore we must make a distinction: because a passion is sometimes so strong as to take away the use of reason altogether, as in the case of those who are mad through love or anger; and then if such a passion were voluntary from the beginning, the act is reckoned a sin, because it is voluntary in its cause, as we have stated with regard to drunkenness. If, however, the cause be not voluntary but natural, his act is rendered wholly involuntary, and he is entirely excused from sin. Sometimes, however, the passion is not such as to take away the use of reason altogether; and then reason can drive the passion away, by turning to other thoughts, or it can prevent it from having its full effect; . . . : wherefore such a passion does not excuse from sin altogether." (Q. 77. Art. 7). This explains Shakespeare's high praise of a man who is "not passion's slave" (*Hamlet*. III. ii. 70). The development of Shakespearean tragedy is a progress from the early stoical distrust of passion in Brutus and Hamlet to the enslavement of reason by passion in Macbeth and Othello. King Lear, out on the stormy heath, with the complete eclipse of reason, represents the final stage of this development. We might almost say that the development of Shakespearean tragedy is a progress in Thomism.

Passions are, in St. Thomas's analysis, indices of free-will. He writes: "Sin consists essentially in an act of the free will, which is a faculty of the will and reason: while passion is a movement of the sensitive appetite. Now the sensitive appetite can be related to the free-will, antecedently and consequently: antecedently, according as a passion of the sensitive appetite draws or inclines the reason or will; and consequently, in so far as the movements of the higher powers redound on to the lower, since it is not possible for the will to be moved to anything intensely, without a passion being aroused in the sensitive appetite."

"Accordingly if we take passion as preceding the sinful act, it must needs diminish the sin; because the act is a sin in so far as it is voluntary, and under our control. Now a thing is said to be under our control through the reason and will; and therefore, the more the reason and will do anything of their own accord rather than through the impulse of passion, the more is it voluntary and controlled. In this respect passion diminishes sin, in so far as it diminishes its voluntariness." (Q. 77. Art. 6). St. Thomas in Q. 77. Art. 8. (Reply to Objetion. 3) holds that "passion does not always hinder the act of reason altogether: consequently the reason remains in possession of its free-will, so far as to turn away from God or turn to Him."

Here we arrive at the source of one of the most important of mediaeval ideas, the idea of the liberty of exercise. A will may be said to be free in many various senses, but first of all in this, that it can

will or not will, put forth or not put forth its act; and this primary freedom is absolutlely essential. In Duns Scotus, the spontaneity of the act of will, already so strongly marked in St. Anselm, attains its definite expression. Passing beyond even Aristotle's dynamism, Scotus postulates a radical opposition between the order of natures, which is that of necessity, and the order of wills, which is that of liberty. Every nature is essentially determined and a principle of determination; every will is essentially undetermined and a principle of indetermination. But this indetermination must not be taken for a mark of insufficiency; on the contrary, it attests the excellence of a faculty not tied down to any determinate act. Duns Scotus goes so far as to treat reason itself as a nature, so that all determination may be put down to the account of knowledge, and all freedom, on the other hand, to that of the will. The contingency of the choice does not depend upon rational judgments, proposing alternative possibilities of actions, but on the spontaneity of the act of will, by which the alternative is resolved. Freedom is therefore wholly centred in the radical indetermination of the will. whose unforeseeable decisions spring from within as from a source of determination, wholly undetermined by anything else.

The Scotist doctrine of liberty sets out specially to show that in no case and in no sense can reason be the total cause of the free act. What Duns Scotus means is that when reason has judged, when all possible alternatives have been defined, weighed, criticised, when the moment for choice has come, then, in so far as choice is not yet affected, the will remains essentially undetermined to fix on this or that. The Scotist liberty of indifference is therefore one with the spontaneity of willling, which thus remains the sole possible element of contingence in face of the determinations of reason. For Duns Scotus, in short, no number of contradictory determinations can amount to one freedom. But, for Boethius, it is quite otherwise; the option of appetite is a mere blind spontaneity. What makes it free is the critique of reason that judges it, compares the various possible options, and declares one to be better than the others. The will, as Aristotle conceived it, is not a simple appetite that follows knowledge, but, precisely owing to this knowledge, is a power capable of making a true choice, or real preference. We might say of it once more that it is in a state of indifference, since it is due to the interval that separates two or more possible actions that its spontaneity will take on the character of a liberty.

The tragic conflict in Shakespeare is characterized by a wavering, a tumult and a struggle between contending tendencies. There is a point of indifference in the soul history of every tragic hero, which makes possible the spontaneity of willing. This is the case with Hamlet, torn on the rack of indecision; this is also to be found in Macbeth's unwilling, grudging consent to the dark designs of Lady Macbeth.

And this is also audible in Othello's tortured cry, as he kisses Desdemona in her bed.

It is not difficult to see how the indecision, the tragic conflict, is due to the will's own indetermination, lying at the root of free-will. Following Boethius along the road that goes *via* the understanding, we situate free-will in the indetermination left open to the will by rational judgment. St. Thomas, seeking as always, the point of equilibrium between opposed tendencies, endeavours to allot, both to understanding and to will, to place them where nature assigns them in the production of the free act. It is will that wills or does not will, and chooses this rather than that; as a faculty it stands to the multiple choices of its freedom as the simplicity of the intellect stands to the movement of reason. On the other hand, it is equally true to say that without the judgment will would not be will. An act of free choice is therefore not to be exhaustively described without the voluntary decision, endorsing a rational judgment, nor without the judgment thus endorsed by the will. St. Thomas stands midway between the older intellectualism of Boethius and the future voluntarism of Duns Scotus. Like Boethius, he will say that an act of free-will is a free judgment, since it is essentially an act of will willing, not of reason judging. Like Duns Scotus, he would readily admit that free-will is to be referred essentially to the will, and moreover says it, but refuses so to define it, without taking into account the judgment of the practical reason, which issues in the voluntary choice as its conclusion.

II

For St. Thomas, then, freedom lies in the spontaneity of the act of will. This is very different from the Augustinian position, which condemned will as the cause of sin. Aquinas was not prepared to accept the Augustinian contention. Aquinas would not condemn will itself; on the other hand, in Thomist philosophy, will ennobles man and makes him god-like. Man is free, able to sin; man sinned by his power of sinning; but this power was no part of his true liberty which is a liberty of not sinning, of not serving sin. In other words, man's liberty was the liberty of a will created free from servitude to sin; his free-will, therefore, was not only free, but was, at the same time, an efficacious power. This free-will abdicated its power in sinning; but are we then to say that this abdication was constitutive of its liberty? A liberty that enslaves itself, even freely, is unfaithful to its own essence; the free act by which it makes itself less free, betrays its own freedom. For this reason, precisely because every will is a power, all diminution of the power of will diminishes the liberty of free-will. The real power is the power of efficaciously willing the good; having done evil, the will

remains free to will the good, but not to do it, it is therefore but a wounded liberty; in restoring lost power, grace restores to free-will something of its first efficacy; far from diminishing, it liberates it; to the spontaneity of the *arbitrium*, it adds that liberty, which is its efficacy.

The act of will is not an evil, a sin, in St. Thomas Aquinas. What is wrong is not that to will is wicked; but will itself has become perverted because of original sin. This brings us to the Thomist analysis of original sin. The gulf of difference between the Aristotelian *hamartia* and the Christian concept of original sin would explain the Shakespearean attitude to tragic conflict. In Aristotle, *hamartia* has been used without any moral implications. "The word, *hamartia* by usage admits of various shades of meaning. As a synonym of *hamartima*, and as applied to a single act, it denotes an error due to inadequate knowledge of particular circumstances. According to strict usage we should add the qualification that the circumstances are such as might have been known. Thus it would cover any error of judgment arising from a hasty or careless view of the special case; an error which in some degree is morally culpable, as it might have been avoided. Error of this kind has the highest claim to pity or consideration. But *hamartia* is also more loosely applied to an error due to unavoidable ignorance, for which the more proper term is *hatuchema*, misfortune. In either case, however, the error is unintentional; it arises from want of knowledge; and its moral quality will depend on whether the individual is himself responsible for his ignorance.[3]

Tragic flaw in Shakespeare is essentially different from this Aristotelian non-moral attitude. In Shakespeare, the position is Christian and basically moral. Tragic flaw is linked up with the concept of original sin. "As a result of original justice, the reason had perfect hold over the lower parts of the soul, while reason itself was perfected by God and was subject to Him. Now this same original justice was forfeited through the sin of our first parent, as already stated (Q. LXXXI. A. 2); so that all the powers of the soul are left, as it were, destitute of their proper order, whereby they are naturally directed to virtue; which destitution is called a wounding of nature.

"Again, there are four of the soul's powers that can be the subject of virtue as stated above (Q. LXI. A.2), viz. the reason, where prudence resides; the will, where justice is; the fortitude, and the concupiscible, the subject of temperance. Therefore in so far as the reason is deprived of its order to the true, there is the wound of ignorance; in so far as the will is deprived of its order to the good, there is the wound of malice; in so far as the irascible is deprived of its orders to the arduous, there is the wound of weakness; and in so far as the concupiscible is deprived of its order to the delectable moderated by reason, there is the wound of concupiscence."[4] In *Summa Theologica*, St. Thomas discusses

whether or not original sin infects the will before the other powers. "Original justice has a prior relation to the will, because it is rectitude of the will, as Anselm states. Therefore original sin, which is opposed to it, also has a prior relation to will. I answer that two things must be considered in the infection of original sin. First, its inherence to its subject. . . In the second place, we must consider its inclination to act. . . It must therefore regard . . . the first inclination to commit a sin, and this is the will," (Q. LXXXIV. AA 1, 2). ". . . Therefore original sin regards first of all the will."[5]

Perverted will is then the direct result of original sin. In *Summa Theologica*, St. Thomas discusses how the will lacking the direction of the rule of reason and of the Divine law, and intent on some mutable good, causes the act of sin directly, and the inordinateness of the act, indirectly, and beside the intention; for the lack of order in the act results from the lack of direction in the will."[6] Original sin results in the lack of direction or order in the will. Lack of direction in the will, because of an inordinate love of mutable good, and absence of the rule of reason leads to an upheaval in the social and psychical order. St. Thomas accurately sums up the pattern of the tragic world: "The will in failing to apply the rule of reason or of the Divine law, has not in itself the nature of evil, whether of punishment or of guilt, before it is applied to the act. Wherefore, accordingly, evil is not the cause of the first sin, but some good lacking some other good."[7] This faith in reason is most excellently expressed by Hamlet: "What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties!" The disarray in the natural order is thus the outcome of the scholastic theory of indifference. It is because of the theory of indifference that man is free. Man's freedom to sin brings him to the verge of annihilation; the wrong choice has been made. This wrong decision is made possible because of the perverted will. The will could not exist without it being perverted, because of the wounds of nature, inflicted on the will by the original sin.

If this be the true nature of tragic conflict in Shakespeare, we may consider the worth of the world after the introduction of evil by the original transgression. The popular idea of a Christian universe corrupted in its very nature by sin owes much of its favour to the influence of Luther, Calvin and Jansenius, but to look at Christianity through their eyes would be to regard it in a very different light from that of Thomism, or even authentic Augustinianism. No one, in fact, could be further than St. Augustine from considering the world in the state of fallen nature as worthless. His own metaphysical principles would forbid it. Since evil is but the corruption of good and cannot possibly subsist at all save in this good, it follows that inasmuch as there is evil, there is also good. In this sense, we may say that evil could not eliminate nature without eliminating itself, since it would have no subject left to inhere in, there

would be none of which it could be affirmed. It is not in the least surprising therefore to find St. Augustine indulging in genuine eulogies of fallen nature. If he deplores that we have lost, he never dreams of despising what remains; even our present miserable state has not lost all its glory in his eyes. We behold a human race that is still of such fecundity as to spread over the entire earth; man himself, whose intelligence, dormant in the infant, progressively awakens and develops until it produces all these arts, lit up with the prodigal splendours of intelligence and invention. There is nothing even in the very body but Augustine will admiringly detail its beauties, for even these remain radiant, in spite of the Fall. The philosophers of the Middle Ages are quite sure that evil is powerless to destroy nature. If optimism consists not in denying the existence of evil, nor in accepting evil, but in looking it in the face and fighting it, then we may legitimately speak of Christian optimism. The world of tragedy does not then present us with a bleak, pessimistic spectacle. The work of creation is shattered, but the fragments remain good, and with the grace of God, they may be reconstituted and restored. "The stars are shining still."

It is this faith in the good of nature, which can never be destroyed by the evil of sin, that makes Shakespearean tragedy essentially Christian. The good in the nature of Macbeth and Othello is clouded by the sin of tempestuous passion. But we come back to them, adoring and admiring their essential goodness, tarnished but not completely destroyed. This is the Christian interpretation of the Aristotelian *hamartia*. This brings us to the essence of Shakespearean tragedy. The world of nature is governed by Mutability; the Fall of Princes is a familiar spectacle.[8] The moral is driven home that everything is subject to flux and change. Side by side with the spectacle of the ruins of Time, there is the awareness that there are things, which do not pass, which no evil can destroy. The reconstruction of the world in ruins starts from some such awareness. Out of the ashes of the old world, subject to chance and mutability, springs the new world, with undying faith in the good of human nature.

This other world, which is placed beyond flux and change, is a world where there is spontaneity of the act of will. This is freedom in the truest sense. We might say at this moment that the essence of moral good and evil was transferred from the outward act to the will; for it is by the will, as St. Augustine says, that a man's life is made righteous or sinful. And by will we must here understand the secret impulse of the heart, whereby it turns to a certain object or a certain end in preference to others. So constantly in the language of the Psalms does the "cry" or "clamour" of the human heart go up to God that with the Fathers, it almost passes into a technical expression. Perhaps a man himself hardly knows from what a heart his actions

spring, but God knows; and thus the moral act is often—one might be tempted to say almost always—transparent to the eye of God alone, opaque and hidden from others, who carry it out. This spontaneous self-declaration of the will to its Creator, of the will that is often unaware of its own motive, this perfect openness before God of all its most secret movements, of all that we conceal from ourselves but cannot dissimulate before Him—all this is what the Psalmist means by clamour. This is what is meant by the use of the word, "Intention". Since the intention of the end is the root, the source, and to put it in one word, the cause of the choice of means, it is clear that the moral qualification of the intention will affect, and in a large measure determine, that of the whole act. If our "eye" is evil as the Scripture puts it, that is, if our intention is bad, then the whole series of voluntary choices which determine the means to be adopted to accomplish it will itself be bad: nothing that we do is good; if we do it for the sake of something evil. Conversely, it may so happen that the choice of means is not so good as the will to the end that inspires it, for with the best intention in the world we can easily miscalculate our acts, or fail in execution; but even so, the good intention is felt throughout the whole series of acts it sustains. It retrieves in a measure their defects, retrieves their mediocrity, so that something good at bottom remains even in that which we do ill, provided only it be done with right intention.

Shakespearean tragedy shows then the fully developed form of this morality of intention, in the strictest sense of the term. In the Aristotelian analysis, it is all a case of wrong judgment, completely independent of moral implications. Abelard's *Scito te ipsum* is important for the history of ethics: and what at once comes to the forefront in his moral philosophy is the preponderating importance of the internal consent as compared with the external act that follows it. To sin is one thing; to put the sin into execution is another. So far does he carry the distinction, that not only does he regard the evil deed as only improperly called sin, but even as adding nothing to the gravity of the sin. The law often punishes actions that are not bad at all, and tolerates others that are. It is not concerned with moral good and evil, but rather with the maintenance of the social order; and hence the extreme importance it attaches to the execution or non-execution of the wrongful act. It is not so with God; He and He alone, takes account not so much of what we do as of the spirit in which it is done, and in all truth. He weighs our guilt by the intention: *veraciter in intentione nostra reatum pensat*. Abelard adds that this is precisely why it is written in *Jeremiah* that He searches the reins and the hearts: seeing in a most wonderful manner, what none other sees, He takes no account of actions when He punishes

Sin, but the intention only, while we, on the contrary, take no account of the intention which quite escapes us, but punish the action, which we see.

The interiorization of morality, or the morality of intention is what characterizes the Christian implications of Shakespearean tragedy. It is not the outward will, but the inward consent, which makes us good or bad. Shakespeare returns to this theme again and again. In *King Lear*. V. iii. 3-6, Cordelia sums up the essential nature of Shakespearean tragedy:

> We are not the first
> Who, with best meaning, have incurred the worst.
> For thee, oppressed King, am I cast down;
> Myself could else out-frown false Fortune's frown.

The morality of intention, the 'best meaning', is no guarantee against the fickleness of fortune. The world is in ruins. The work of reconstruction begins from within. This reconstruction is only possible, because of the secret cravings, the clamour of the will. In emphasizing the essential goodness of the will in tragedy, Shakespeare is returning to Abelard and above all to Aquinas.

Closely associated with the Christian concept of the morality of intention, is the Christian idea of salvation through grace. This seemed to have dominated Shakespeare's tragic outlook. It need not be emphasized that this attitude is essentially scholastic. In *Romeo and Juliet*, II. 3. 28-29, Shakespeare goes back to his first lessons in scholastic philosophy.

> Two such opposed kings encamp them still,
> In man as well as on herbs—grace and rude will.

Christian grace rebuilds the world, thrown into disarray by the act of will. The world was held together by mercy and love; these two gave meaning and purpose to life. Rude will is evil; this has disturbed the order and harmony. But that which brings about death and destruction, assures us everlasting life. This is a mystery, the mystery of the perennial appeal of great tragedy. St. Thomas more than any other found out the exact nature of this mystery. The free-act by which liberty makes itself less free, betrays its own freedom. The evil has been done, but the will remains free to will the good, though not to do it; it is therefore only a diminution of its original power. Grace restores to free-will something of its first efficacy. The tragic conflict in Shakespeare is thus Christian and very different from its treatment among the Greeks. Shakespearean tragedy seems to end with a message, which is essentially scholastic. *King Lear* represents this Christian belief in the efficacy of "grace". The old King after regaining consciousness, says to Cordelia:

You do me wrong to take me out o' the grave.
Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire.

Lear says that Cordelia must be a spirit, come to pour graces on his tortured soul. (IV. iii. 49). Shakespeare seems to play with the idea of salvation through grace and damnation when grace is denied. Regan and Goneril mock at the idea of grace. In *King Lear*, V. iii. 62-69. Regan refers to Edmund, "That's as we list to grace him," to which Goneril retorts:

Not so hot;
In his own grace he doth exalt himself
More than in your addition.

So we come to the crux of the problem. Tragic conflict and tragic suffering and salvation through grace—all are mysteries. They are deeply Christian, making Shakespearean tragedy fundamentally different from the Greek. And this tragic view derives itself ultimately from Aquinas, whether Shakespeare knew or did not know Aquinas.

References

The extracts from Aquinas have been taken from *Summa Theologica*, ed. by the Dominican Fathers (Burns. Oates and Washbourne).

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2. Summa Theologica, I, lxxvi, 1.
3. S. H. Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art* (Dover Publications), p. 318.
4. *Summa Theologica*, Pt. I of Pt. II, Q. LXXXVI, Art. 3.
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6. Ibid., Pt. I of Pt. II, Q. LXXV, Art. 1.
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SHAKESPEARE IN THE CLASS-ROOM

MAHIMOHAN BOSE

ONE who was a teacher of English and is now a journalist of repute is reported to have said that if he ever went to heaven, which he very much doubted, he would ask God for one boon; to send Shakespeare down to earth to sit an examination on Shakespeare and see himself fail in it. This, I think, is the crux of the business of teaching Shakespeare. It is dealing with Shakespeare in a medium with which it is not easy to reconcile him and his art. All transplantation to a foreign soil, no matter how skilfully and delicately done, involve some violence to a plant and the life of the plant in its new bed depends on whether the new soil is congenial to its life and growth, if uncongenial, the composition of the soil has to be modified or even drastically transformed by adventitious means. If Ben Jonson was the scholars' dramatist Shakespeare was the dramatist of the commonalty of England which was awakening to a consciousness of its own dormant mind, and so he wrote for men who were mostly taught only in the school of experience and not in the cloistered seclusion of institutions. The few men who were educated beyond this ambit, had, nevertheless, the roots of their being deep in the soil of practical activity and adventure. The poetry of Philip Sidney, for example, was, in this sense, more an excrescence than a florescence; for it was a startling deviation from his dominant vocation. People like Sir Amyas Leigh and John Oxenham, to mention only two, as we find their portraits in *Westward Ho*, represent the England of Shakespeare and the contemporary conditions which moulded the character and constituted almost the sole education of the greater part of the nation. Shakespeare was a product of this expansive age in which England rode on the tide of prosperous maritime adventure abroad and of fortunate circumstance within her boundaries.

And this brilliant, restless, splendid, kaleidoscopic life, with gleams of its undercurrent of squalor is the leaven of Shakespeare's plays which go further and treat of its implications. His mental range is so vast and his reach so high that it is not enough for his canvas to cover his country alone; but even when he draws upon the ancient and contemporary worlds to people the vast spaces of his mighty canvas, these suffer a 'sea change' into something which is transformed to fit

into the narrower and specific dimensions of the matrix which fashioned the spirit of renascent England.

These factors, among others, make it difficult to place his plays in true perspective not only to students in India but, I should say, even to English students of an England changed beyond recognition and retaining many of the characteristics of Shakespeare's England only as fossils of specimens long extinct, embedded in the social structure of the nation as it is at present or the embalmed remains of traditional trends no longer valid but vaguely venerated, like its stately homes which are hardly homes to-day and yet draw the admiration of gaping crowds. It is this spirit and atmosphere, which are to-day little more than a vague and elusive perfume, that have to be captured and purveyed. This would be difficult at any time and becomes much more so when one remembers the audience for whom Shakespeare wrote and from whose pulse he never removed his skilled, diagnostic fingers. Shakespeare wrote for an audience which is far-removed from that in a class-room. His plays had an immediacy of appeal which is hard to retain when they are sought to be presented through the medium of exposition. This difficulty increases another step when, again, the exposition has to be made to students in a language in which they may not all be perfectly at home—or even when at home in it, to the extent of being able to manipulate it to express their thoughts, but who lack the background which helps one more than anything else to enter into the imaginative recesses of a language and of the literature whcch springs from it; for the finest and subtlest nuances of a literature are realized not by the intellect and technical knowledge of the language but by subtle sympathy and intuition, which are aided by a familiarity with the social usage, customs and specific outlook of a people. Since Shakespeare's language is richer and his vocabulary larger than of any other English writer, the difficulty of comprehending his plays in all their dimensions becomes commensurately difficult, as also the methods which attempt to convey their comprehension to the Indian student. It has been my experience that certain things in Shakespeare which present no difficulty to an English student and, therefore, need no effort to teach, often present almost insuperable difficulty in relation to an Indian student and it is not at all because the latter is slower in the uptake. In fact, my impression is that the Indian student is quicker in his reaction to the drama than an English student of the same intellectual standard, most probably because drama expressed in a love of pageantry and elaborate ceremonials is more deeply ingrained in the composition of our nation. There is, however, one common language of the drama irrespective of the language in which it is written and that is the language of expression, voice, and demeanour, for these were the media of communi-

cation before articulate language was evolved. They constitute the language before language and go down to the very roots of primitive being and therefore still retain their universality inspite of the divisions and differentiation of diverse forms of articulate speech. This should be made the key to the revelation and expositions of Shakespeare's plays. The trail of comprehension should be blazed by these and the rest of the exposition should follow in its wake. Three great teachers of Shakespeare who taught Indian students over long years and at whose feet I sat—P. C. Ghosh, H. M. Percival and J. C. Scrimgeour—made constant use of the dramatic methods in teaching, the first and the last to such a degree that at times they were too overcome by their own method to continue their classes. I remember an incident when Dr. Scrimgeour nearly collapsed in class while teaching *Othello*. My tutor, Percy Simpson, never ceased to emphasize this element in the teaching of Shakespeare. A vast amount of scholarship and equally impressive industry and diligence have been devoted to Shakespeare. The circumstances under which Shakespeare's plays were published, necessitated industrious research of the mere investigator of extraneous facts; but much misplaced zeal and erroneous assessment of dramatic purpose have led to much useless criticism; when all this vast mass of research is winnowed and prepared, it should never be made to obtrude itself on the teaching of Shakespeare, specially to Indian students. The teacher should acquire it only if he will take the pains to assimilate it so that not only does it not obtrude on his teaching but, what is most essential, also on his mental attitude towards the understanding of the significance of Shakespeare's plays. To encourage students themselves to read out parts of a play in the classroom is a device which I have found helpful to students and have often employed with good results. In the very resonance of the words charged with dramatic import which a student will speak, his understanding of a Shakespeare play will be deepened. There is a species of prānāyāma, which is part of the ancient 'Yogic' discipline, in which the resonance of sound is used as a specific exercise. This is supposed to liberate certain faculties of apprehension. I believe, the intoned, dramatic articulation, if practised by the student himself is a great aid to the understanding of Shakespeare, specially as under the conditions of acting in Shakespeare's time, audient appeal was for greater than the visual. There was less of the senses to divert the mind from getting to the inner core of Shakespeare's plays and what was of the senses was conveyed by the living voice in all the manifold richness of its subtle nuances.

Another useful aid is in the comparative method which can be of great advantage. The dramatic and epic literature of our own country is a rich storehouse with which students are expected to have some acquaintance at least and which can, and should, be freely drawn upon. This will help the student to acquire the element of reality in respect

of his impression of Shakespeare quite apart from any scholastic knowledge of theories of Shakespeare drama. The proliferating breed of notes which flood the market make it not only easy but sorely tempting for the student to cram ill digested facts of a play of Shakespeare; this is likely to be substituted for, or smother, understanding of the play. This makes it all the more necessary that the teacher should keep theory as much in the background as possible, for the student is likely to be entangled already in its tortuous toils which are hard to destroy because of the undergrowth of vested intersets. The student should be encouraged to discover Shakespeare for himself, or as much of him as he can, without the aid of the professional guides who dong his steps. All the teacher should do is to aid him in this discovery without smothering and blotting out the student by his own overshadowing presence. The teacher should be ready to lend the student his shoulder to lean upon if he is about to stumble, but never to lift and carry him along the way of discovery which can be so only if the student discovers it for himself.

Shakespear's plays are so rich in their nuances of significance, the words often so inextricably linked with the corresponding action which brings them to their fullest fruition, that the teaching of Shakespeare in the class-room should go hand in hand with the presentment, of the profounder passages at least, in dramatic form. In Shakespeare the expositor and the actor should exist in interchangeable parallelism. Even this may not be sufficient in some of the highest reaches of his tragedies. It has been said that some of Burns's poems should be sung with the throat of the whirlwind; that is true in a more pervasive sense of parts of Shakespeare's plays. Where even words and action wedded are inadequate to convey the full poignant and sublime significance of the great tragedies the aid of music should be sought—the symphonic movement of exalted harmonies and discords and the impalpably delicate and intricate weavings of the melodic patterns of the music of the East. Thus treated in the classroom, the great things in Shakespeare's plays will cease to be mere projections on a flat surface of verbal interpretation and will become three dimensional creations in the composite media of words, action and music; for the myriad-mindedness of Shakespeare at his best needs the combined powers of all the art-forms to sustain and reveal the full richness and profundity of that ultimate significance and far-reaching implication which his plays at their all but unscalable eminence possess.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE ON SHAKESPEARE

BHABATOSH DATTA

I

'LOOKING back on the times we have just spoken of', Tagore wrote in his *Jivansmriti*[1], 'I have a feeling that perhaps in those days we received from English literature more intoxication than nourishment. We used to be idolaters of Shakespeare, Milton and Byron. What moved us deeply was something common to the writings of all the three, a preponderance of emotion. This emotionalism hardly makes itself felt in English manners: there is, however, compensation—it enjoys a supremacy in English literature. Hence there is a tendency in this literature to carry emotion to an excess so that the final effect is, as it were, that of conflagration. This exuberant emotionalism, in any case, constituted for us the essence of English literature. When Mr Akshoy Chaudhuri, our literary mentor, used to recite English poetry rhapsodically, an atmosphere of intoxication prevailed. The excessive emotionalism associated with the passion of Romeo and Juliet; the helplessness and agony, the madness of Lear; the jealousy that like a fire rages through and devastates the Othello world,—worked up a strong excitement in the minds of Mr Chaudhuri's contemporaries.

The drama of Shakespeare's time was the medium which offered full expression to emotions, checked and curbed during the Middle Ages and released in the age of the Renaissance which followed as a reaction. For this literature moral or aesthetic issues were not the primary ones. It is as if one desired to remove all fetters from the natural impulses and allow them the fullest possible scope.'

Shakespeare's influence was indeed very strong on the educated young men of Bengal at the time referred to by Tagore. Our young literature received from the literature of England a variety of influences and models. A comparison with the earlier literature in Bengali will show that the new forms, styles and ideals that were being shaped owed much to English literature. It was significant that an unbroken tradition of staging the plays of Shakespeare by the Hindu College[2] students goes as far back as 1837. The earliest rendering of Shakespeare's play into Bengali appeared in 1853[3]. The first mid-nineteenth century phase of the Bengali drama was occupied principally in defining the form. This period

of experimentation was practically over around 1861, the year of Tagore's birth. By then the usefulness of the Shakespearean five-act structure and complex plot had been more or less universally accepted. Why Shakespeare won the day and the Sanskrit drama lost, would indeed be an interesting academic question. That Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Dinabandhu Mitra adopted the Shakespearean pattern for *Krishnakumari* (1861) and *Nil-Darpan* (1861) respectively, did, however, clinch the issue. Their successors unquestioningly adopted the five-act pattern as the basis of dramatic structure. Many years later, in the Preface to *Malini* Tagore observed:

"Shakespearean drama has always been the model of all our dramas. It has from the very first fascinatated us by its variety, range and sustained pattern of conflict."

The problem, however, is that the dramatic forms prevalent in the western literature have been intimately related to the context of the European tradition; these forms have, as it were, evolved naturally; they have not been imposed from outside. One could, for instance, see in the Shakespearean pattern with its peculiar stress on the hero a strong relationship with the spirit of individualism that was associated with the Renaissance. One has indeed the impression that the Shakespearean five-act structure was perhaps primarily meant to be an appropriate vehicle for the hero. It may not even be over-fanciful to see in the sharp definition that Shakspeare gives to the successive mental states of his central characters, the operation of the interest in the individual that was the significant characteristic of his age. In Shakespeare one sees naturalistic drama at its height; in fact his naturalism is part of the naturalistic positivistic heritage of Europe that has moulded the European mentality and way of life and given them their characteristic direction. Unlike the Indian tradition with its idealistic bias and the consequent subordination of action to contemplation this heritage has put the focus on action and on the individual. Hence perhaps the stress in European criticism on a unified and completed action, on a plot that is held together by the laws of necessity and probability.

This is what Tagore suggested in the extract quoted at the beginning. Tagore did not question Shakespeare's success in depicting life, nor did he question the humanity of Shakespeare's characters. The point, that he wanted to make was that Shakespearean drama grew organically out of the western culture. Hence, while he admitted Shakespeare's greatness, he also had his doubts as to whether imitating Shakespeare would be desirable in the context of our own life and literary tradition. A dramatic form that was inextricably wedded to an alien mentality,— an alien way of life— would, he felt, be bound to appear artificial if borrowed wholesale by Bengalees. If a hero modelled in the European manner is set against an Indian background and the plot adjusted ac-

cordingly, the whole thing was certain to appear melodramatic; there is indeed every chance that the dynamic activity of the hero would strike us as exaggerated and therefore false. A sensational plot in the Shakespearean manner cannot but leave on us the impression of unreality. The novels of Bankim Chandra Chatterji are a case in point. Do not the sensational plots of Chatterji's novels, Tagore was to ask[5] later, belong to mere romance?

"The stories that I have written were the first to present the truth about Bengali society. Can we say that novels like *Durgeshnandini* or *Kapalkundala* are true to life? Did such romantic situations exist in life? The fact is that Chatterji had read English romances and liked them. These forms gave him pleasure and so he imported them into our literature."

It may be interesting, at this point, to juxtapose the remarks of the distinguished critic, Mr Mohitlal Majumdar[6] on Chatterji's links with English literature and particularly with Shakespeare:

"Chatterji followed Shakespeare in accepting two cardinal principles—Destiny and Character, the inscrutability of the one and the submission of the other. The tragedy that emerges is real on the empirical level, the basic level in the scheme of Mr. Chatterji's novels. In this sense he is a follower of Shakespeare."

If Majumdar is right, it was Chatterji who gave us the perception of life in the concrete that we associate with Shakespeare. Curiously enough, Tagore describes this concrete mode which Chatterji took from English writers as romantic and false.

II

Our immediate concern is, however, with Tagore's views on Shakespeare, and not with the correctness of Tagore's criticism of Chatterji or the validity of Majumdar's views. In the passage from the *Reminiscences* and the remarks on Bankim Chandra Chatterji quoted above, Tagore seems clearly to imply that by and large Shakespeare has been a wrong model for Bengali writers, and that imitations of Shakespeare have accordingly been useless. He also implies that the waste of literary energy involved in these imitations might have been avoided if the ethos of Bengal could have shaped for itself a formal structure that would give it the most natural expression. That there is a great, almost unbridgable, gap between the Bengali ethos and that implicit in Shakespeare's plays, Tagore emphasized in the essay *Nara-Nari*.[7] Tagore notes that while in English literature the heroes and the heroines are equally prominent, the heroes in the literature of Bengal are colourless but the women are relatively dynamic. He introduces his thesis with illustrations from Shakespeare:

"In English literature the heroes and the heroines are equally impressive. Othello and Iago are in no way less impressive than Desdemona; and although Antony is totally overpowered by the spell of Cleopatra he yet stands like a towering column, broken yet grand . . . But in Bengali literature one cannot but notice the supremacy of the women."

Tagore's own explanation is put in the mouth of Bhutnath Babu, the president of the symposium:

"One must remember that in Bengal the men have so to say no occupation. The family is the only sphere left to them, but even there the women play the dominant rôle: it is they who create homes and break them up. . . . . In other lands the men folk engage themselves in manly duties; they run kingdoms, fight wars and negotiate treaties; and through all this they develop a nature characteristically different from that of women. But our men are home-bred creatures, nursed by their mothers and led by their wives. Their lives have not been associated with any great ideas, any great work in any great field. They have had at the same time to undergo all the humiliations and frustrations that political subjection involves. They have never had occasion to accept manly responsibilities. They have led instead servile and cowardly lives."

There can hardly be a hero in this society. It follows that there can be no room for a hero in a literature that is true to Indian life, and the Indian ethos. A further corollary is that the Shakespearean plot-structure with a hero at its centre, will be of little use to us. Comparing the Indian attitudes with themes in Shakespeare, Tagore argues that the forms of Indian literature are bound to be different from western forms. Tagore draws his illustrations from Sanskrit literature presumably because he finds no worthy parallels in the literature of Bengal prior to the introduction of the influence of Shakespeare. One of the characteristic themes of European literature is Man's struggle with Nature for supremacy. It is in this conflict that the character of the hero attains its fullest development:[8]

"Man as presented by *The Tempest* has not reached this fulfilment by expanding his sympathies and liking himself with the universe in the holy bonds of love; he has, on the contrary, sought to make himself absolute by subjugating the universe. Indeed man's attempted mastery and his conflict with nature constitute the central theme of *The Tempest*. Prospero, who was denied sway over his own Dukedom, is seen to exercise by means of his charms and spells a stern domination over the world of nature. Turn again to the few who have just managed to escape an imminent death. Even among them there is a conspiracy over mastery of a deserted island, treason, an attempted assassination! It is true that the play ends with a compromise, but how lasting is this going to be?"

Tagore believed that in Sanskrit literature there is none of this opposition between Man and Nature. In *Uttararamacharita*, in *Abhijnan Sakuntalam*, in the *Ramayana*, one notices everywhere an intimate relationship, a deep sympathy between Man and Nature. This association between Man and Nature is not a mere rhetorical trick; it is an essential feature of the Indian outlook. In both our life and literature there has been an equal stress on one ideal, that of the fulfilment of the self through establishing spiritual relationships with all objects so that one may be in harmony with the universe. Speaking of the evil impulses in the heart of man Tagore observed:

"These wild impulses do raise storms. We keep them under control forcibly as we keep wild beasts under the leash. All this, is, however, a case of meeting force with force, only an *ad hoc* method, not a permanent solution acceptable to our moral nature which aims at the total elimination of evil by means of Beauty, Goodness and Love."[9]

As Tagore sees it, the central theme of Indian literature is the fulfilment of the soul through union with the universe, and not the unnatural prominence of man which results from his opposition to the rest of the world. While Shakespeare has used a form adequate for dramatizing the sensational story of a hero engaged in a struggle for ascendancy over nature, an Indian poet like Kalidasa is primarily interested in representing what is for Tagore a deeper and nobler theme, the realization of truth that follows disenchantment. From this difference in aim follows a corresponding difference in form; Shakespeare is committed to the naturalistic mode as his interest is primarily in natural environment. Since that environment is governed by necessary laws, it is no wonder that the plot-sequence too should be determined by laws of necessity or probability. The truth that Indian literature is concerned with, is not the truth of probability operating in the physical world, but an ideal truth that can transcend the physical barriers. This is what Tagore had in mind in his remark on *Sakuntala*:[10]

"I am sure a European poet would have concluded his play on the note of vain regret at the point where Dushyanta discovers his error on being given the ring by a fisherman. Dushyanta's *chance* encounter with Sakuntala on his way back from heaven and the reconciliation that came later would not have been permitted by the European dramatic theory with its insistence on a *causal* relationship linking all the parts of a plot. From the European angle a tragic end would appear to be the logical outcome of the pattern brought in right in the beginning of the play. Accordingly, the reunion of Sakuntala and Dushyanta is [in terms of European theory] only a case of the dramatist having recourse to *deus ex machina*, a conclusion not determined by internal factors. We are not prepared for it by anything in the situation or the behaviour of the principal characters."

There is no reason to believe that the expression "the European poet" excludes Shakespeare. In fact it is quite likely that Tagore had Shakespeare in mind when he said all this. Complications leading inexorably to a tragic catastrophe—this is the characteristic Shakespearean pattern where episode follows episode in a full sequence governed by a cause-and-effect relationship. Obviously the structure of Kalidasa's play does not conform to this pattern except initially. To Tagore, however, the later episodes of Sakuntala are not excrescent ones, lifting the play from the naturalistic level on to that of fantasy; from the Indian point of view the conclusion is not unrelated to the beginning nor does it lack truth.

Will it be enough to dismiss this comparison that Tagore makes between Shakespeare and Kalidasa as something merely academic or bookish? It will certainly be difficult not to carry away the impression that a bond of intimate sympathy binds Tagore with Kalidasa, a sympathy born of an affinity in spirit. Just as in his comparison[11] between *Sakuntala* and *Tempest* Bankim Chandra Chatterji did not conceal his admiration for the Shakespearean manner, Tagore also leaves us in no doubt as to his admiration of Kalidasa.

III

It is, however, interesting that in the early part of his career Tagore himself had not been altogether unaffected by the air of Shakespeare-worship that prevailed in nineteenth century Bengal. The translation that the youthful Tagore made of the opening scene of Macbeth shows at least a fashionable interest in Shakespeare; and the fact remains that for several years after this he stuck to the dramatic convention that stemmed from Shakespeare. Two plays, the *Visarjan*[12] and the *Raja O Rani*[13], are notable in this connection. Both employ the five-act structure; and in respect of the rapid succession of events that characterizes the plot and the conception of the hero, these two plays are not inconsistent with the Elizabethan dramatic tradition. Raghupati, egotistic and resolute, is for instance not quite unlike an Elizabethan protagonist, nor is for that matter Vikramdeva, whose uncontrolled passion forces events to a crisis. These two plays are of course transitional ones and they both end with the conversion theme characteristic of Tagore's approach. However, the initial situation in both cases involved the creation of a concrete, impulse-ridden world where love, anger, revenge and ambition provide the dynamism of the plot and one may argue that in this respect they have links with Elizabethan dramas.

Yet there is a danger that what may be called the 'Elizabethan' elements of these two plays may be overstressed. One of the most significant things about these two plays is that they show Tagore using

conventions and yet groping towards a form of his own, the form that will be the right embodiment of his very Indian spirit. At the outset he follows the dictates of convention and so accepts a plot-pattern that derives its dynamism from the passions of an individual, yet before the play is over he has given the pattern his own turn and the emphasis and the effect undergo a thorough change. This change in vision and theme is reflected in the shifts of importance that takes place within the plot. Jaysingha replaces Raghupati as the centre of interest and the interest shifts from the passionate Vikramdeva to the virtuous Sumitra. That the conventions of drama should be reshaped by Tagore is not surprising; his real aim, as shown for instance by the remarks on Kalidasa, was to create a form that would truly reflect the permanent spiritual truth, the whole truth as opposed to the 'partial truths' of a world of passions and impulses:

"Humanity", observes Tagore[14], "certainly owes much to the tireless seekers of material truth, the glorious races for whom the partial truth has been the whole truth and art has been only a mirror. At the same time we must record our gratitude to those who believed that 'Absolute happiness consists only in the contemplation of the Infinite' and accordingly directed all their spiritual efforts at realizing the fullness of a vision that fuses all disparities into a unity and all conflicts into a harmony".

For Tagore the most important thing about the Indian way of life was this stress on the whole truth. So, as he looked at it, the passions and impulses of which Raghupati's ambition is only one example are all concerned with partial truths. Since these were the stuff out of which Shakespeare made his dramas, we are led to the conclusion that the world of his plays is also one of partial truths. These passions are of course not without a grandeur of their own: there is a power in Tagore's representation of Raghupati and Vikramdeva which gives us a feeling—much in the same way as Satan in *Paradise Lost*, Book I, does —that this strength is derived from a fascinated interest on the part of the poet, conscious or unconscious, yet for Tagore the real and permanent truth is the truth of love and harmony, the truth of which Jaysingha-Aparna (in *Visarjan*) and Sumitra (in *Raja O Rani*) are the embodiments. Symbolism naturally plays an important rôle in an art that is viewed as the vehicle of spiritual truths. As we have already seen, Tagore introduced symbolic meanings into his interpretation of Kalidasa's plays. A deep interest in symbolism, we may say, characterized Tagore's mental activity, whether as a poet or as a critic, and here he stands in contrast to Shakespeare. Shakespearean characters may not be without symbolic dimensions, but they are too complex to be merely symbols; so vivid and lifelike is their conception that they give one the impression of having the complexity of living men and women. One

cannot help making the inference that what the Shakespearean genius was mainly preoccupied with was the exploration of characters. The great merit of the Shakespearean mode of characterization is an extraordinary subtlety in delineating mental events and conflicts. The mind of Tagore had, however, a different cast: unlike Shakespeare he was not interested in concrete particulars for their own sake. A concrete particular appeared invariably to him as a symbol. In view of this fundamental difference, both ideological and formal, it is indeed questionable if Tagore could take much from Shakespeare even if he wanted to. In any case, Tagore did not look upon Shakespeare as a desirable model at any point in his literary career. In the *Visarjan* there is for instance little evidence of a creative influence exerted by Shakespeare; its five-act structure is simply a convention he inherited from his predecessors. This alliance between a personal vision and an alien mode could hardly be a lasting one; after he wrote the *Pravashchhitra* (1909), Tagore decided to cut himself free.

IV

What emerges from the above is that Tagore did not consider the complicated and sensational plot-structure of Shakespeare's plays suitable for his own temperament and his needs. It is interesting that he put forward this view explicitly is some letters to Srish Majumdar (1882), at a time when he could not himself help using such plots in his own dramas. Of one thing, however, he was sure: he believed that Shakespeare's real greatness lies not in how he manoeuvred his plots, but in the universality attained by his characters. In several of his letters to his friend Lokendranath Palit, who incidentally inspired in the poet a keen interest in English and French literatures, Tagore refers to Shakespeare. Stressing the importance of the human elemant in the reader's expectation Tagore observed:[15]

"However we may look at it, the fact remains that what we look for (in literature) either directly or indirectly is humanity, the basic humanity rather than an unreal abstraction produced by a doctrinaire approach. Tears and laughter, love and hate—these are the human feelings that like sunshine and shower enrich and sustain our hearts, and it is these that we look for.

Now, where do these rise from—these tears and laughter, love and hate, that move us in literature? They rise from the ever-flowing springs of life in the depth of our common humanity. It is from these springs of life that the world of men created by Shakespeare derives its strength —a world that includes the whole panorama of living characters with Falstaff and Dogberry at one end, Lear and Hamlet at the other. . . . This is why Shakespeare will never be out of date."

Granting that this universality is the ideal that every artist seeks to realize, it does not follow that an eventful, sensational plot should be the only means of attaining it. It is of course a fact that Shakespeare found this type of plot useful. But Shakespearean plot-structure can be defended, considering that, in the first place he was working within certain conventions, and secondly that his plots would not have appeared totally unreal in the context of the actual social conditions of his time:

'Violent incidents and intense emotions, moments of crisis in which a man might view his whole career dramatically were not unreal in Shakespeare's age. In these days of regular civilized life such violent situations have become scarce.'[16]

Tagore even went so far as to accept the usefulness of such material in certain cases. Referring to Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* in the essay *Aitihasika Upanyasa*[17], Tagore claimed that the situation there was one that we are familiar with in everyday life. 'There have been innumerable cases of able men, not necessarily well known, being seduced and destroyed. Life's way is strewn about with such wrecks, relics of the passion and nobility.' The chief justification of a romantic plot is that by exploiting an historical setting it can lend distance and magnitude to the explosive potential in life.

V

We have already seen how some of Tagore's predispositions made him react unsympathetically to certain aspects of Shakespeare's dramatic achievement; although he never failed to praise the universality of Shakespeare's character. We have also seen how in obedience to the trends of his own genius he came to abandon the naturalistic pattern in his dramas and developed a symbolic form of his own. Indeed our enquiry has so far been concerned with differences rather than similarities—differences in outlook, choice of material, treatment of plot, and conception of character. The present writer, however, feels that this study will be incomplete without reference to Tagore's success in creating characters in his short stories. These short stories are distinguished by an acute insight into character, a wide range of interest, an impersonal approach and a naturalistic method: it may not be too fanciful to say that these reveal a 'negative capability' not incomparable to that attributed to Shakespeare. It is as if only in this area that Tagore's innate lyricism could also accommodate the objectivity which, one believes, is associated with the creation of concrete character. Despite the limitations imposed by the short story-form, a character like 'Chandara' in the story *Shasti* (Punishment)—the condemned woman who refuses to say the word that would save her from the gallows—attains a vividness that may be described as Shakespearean. For a period

of nearly ten years (1891—1901)—the period to which, interestingly enough, the main body of Tagore's Shakespearean criticism belongs—a number of short stories were written, memorable for the wealth and complexity of their characters. The degree of the objectivity attained in the short stories is shown by the fact that they are more or less free from any 'philosophy'.

Finally, it may not be without interest to note that in the speech of a Tagore-character, Gandhari, in *Gandharir Abedan*[18] occurs a statement on the essence of tragedy that is not inapplicable to Shakespeare's tragic universe. Gandhari has a vision of the universal moral order (*Kāla*, as she calls it) reasserting itself, and of the resulting tumult and self-division:

"The day on which after the long night Kāla will wake up from slumber and strive to make himself pure, will be a day of great woe. It will be like the rise of a terrible storm after an ominous lull when the winds remain dazed on account of the intense heat. And then suddenly they wake up and lash at themselves like scorpions that fling on their own heads their fiery tails . . ."

This reads like a curious anticipation of Bradley's well-known statement[19] on the essence of Shakespeare's tragedy:

"The whole order against which the individual part shows itself powerless seems to be animated by a passion for perfection: we cannot otherwise explain its behaviour towards evil. Yet it appears to engender this evil within itself, and in its effort to overcome and expel it it is agonized with pain and driven to mutilate its own substance and to lose not only evil but priceless good."

What brings Gandhari's statement close to Shakespeare is the presence of a somewhat positive sense of evil and the element of tragic waste. A study of Tagore's conception of evil would be outside the scope of the present essay. It may, however, be observed that Tagore's usual and characteristic approach in regard to the question of evil is set forth in an essay in *Sadhana*[20] where evil is regarded as the product of ignorance; something that appears to the undivided vision as more of a help than hindrance. Evil on this view is something that lacks substance and whose importance may be exaggerated.

"Evil", Tagore says, "cannot altogether arrest the course of life on the highway and rob it of its possessions. For the evil has to pass on, it has to grow into good." (*Sadhana*)

The reconciliations and conversions that mark the characteristic Tagore-themes are naturally related to this cosmology. The Gandhari-passage is interesting because of its stress on things that Tagore elsewhere took care not to stress. How much of this is due to Shakespeare, it will be difficult to say. All that we know is that the *Gandharir Abedan* belongs to the period of the short stories, which was also the era of his Shakespeare criticism.

In all that Tagore wrote since 1905 or thereabouts there is little that refers to or recalls Shakespeare. *Balaka*, of course, contains a sonnet addressed to Shakespeare. But from now on Tagore showed on the whole little interest in the naturalistic method.

—(Translated from the Bengali original by the author and Shri Kalidas Bose, who are also responsible for the English rendering of the Tagore passages.)

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   "The gracefulness of Othello attracts us. But the savage cruelty in the concluding part is repellent; it is something that probably oversteps the limits of art." (Letter dated 12 September 1894, *Chhinnapatrabali*, 1960, P. 329).

   Five years back Tagore had spoken of *Anna Karenina* in the following terms:

   "I tried to read *Anna Karenina*, but found it unreadable. I do not understand why such sickly stuff should be read at all" (Ibid, Letter dated 12 June 1889).
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SHAKESPEARE IN JOHN COMPANY'S CALCUTTA

ARABINDA PODDAR

I

If the Hon'ble John Company's men gave England a new empire, they brought to that empire, among varied things, a new name, that of William Shakespeare. It was through these men about 1750 and after that the Elizabethan "upstart crowe" entered into the hectic life of Calcutta surprisingly early in the rise of the British rule in India. He was here before the first ever English word was incorporated into the Bengali vocabulary—'decree'—in a lyric of Ramprasad Sen; and even before Clive, scandalized, at the inordinate 'luxury' and 'rapacity' of the Company's Civil Servants, had exclaimed in 1767, 'Alas how is the English name sunk!' To these men goes the pioneer's honour for building in 1755 Calcutta's first playhouse, that of Lalbazar Street, and, although our knowledge regarding its histrionic activities remains very slender indeed, we will not be wrong yet in our presumption that selected scenes or full-length plays from Shakespeare might have figured in contemporary bills of theatrical fare. There were no newspapers in those days to catch the fleeting moments for the benefit of posterity. Twenty-five fruitless summers were yet to slip by in order to pave the way for the appearance of Bengal's, and for that matter also India's, first newspaper, *Hickey's Bengal Gazettee*, "a weekly political and commercial paper open to all parties, but influenced by none." (1780).

With the *Bengal Gazette*, we move on to recorded history. The *Gazette*, in its issue of the 9th-16th Dec. 1780, mentioned Shakespeare for the first time in an editorial item captioned 'description of an Englishman in Othello by Shakespeare,' and reproduced the following extract:

> *Iago*—Did you ever hear an Englishman reckon up the Priviledges (sic) he has by Birth Right?
>
> *Cassio*—No—good Iago—what are they, pray?
>
> *Iago*—Why to say what he pleases of the Government; to eat more Beef and drink more Claret than any Three Subjects of any other country; and to do whatever he pleases, wherever he is;—Therefore he raves at his King though ever so good, while a Frenchman worships *the worst*.—He breaks this week the Law he voted for the last and in all

> Countries, he is winked at and excused, for doing what would send a Native to a Mad House.—He eats up the whole Ox in less Time, than a Frenchman swills the soup he makes *of the shine*—and as to Drinking, your dane (sic), Your *German* and your swag Belly'd *Hollander* are nothing to your Free Born Englishman, in his drinking, he will lay you france (sic), Austria, and Russia at the feet of the table, with no more concern at the Tavern, than in the field of Battle.

This spurious citation from *Othello* was closely followed up by an ingenious as well as amusing notice regarding the intended performance of the play itself. The announcement, published in the Gazette's issue of the 23rd to 30th December 1780, reads:

> The Managers of the Theatre having generously offer'd to give a benefit play to Mr. Soubise, toward the completion of his Manege, Mr. Soubise will appear on that night in the character of Othello. And afterwards perform the part of Mungo in the entertainment... The part of Iago will be attempted by the Author of the Monitor, and desdemona (sic) by Mr. H. a gentleman of doubtful Gender.

In the same issue was published the 'Epitaph on David Garrick Esq. by the Late Doctor Goldsmith' of which the last two lines run as follows:—

> Old Shakespeare received him with praises and with Love,
> And Beaumonts, and Bens, be his Kelly's above.
>
> O.G.

The aforesaid Mr. Soubise appears to have endeared himself to many of the already enlarged European community, the testimony of which lies in two separate communications to his patrons through the *Bengal Gazette*. The first, published in the issue of the 3rd to 10th June, 1780 and reprinted in several subsequent issues, announced as follows: "Mr. Soubise Begs leave to inform the Gent. of the Settlement, that he has left Mr. Le Gallais's and now keeps his school at the Harmonic, where he attends, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, from seven in the Morning till half past ten o'clock." The second communication published in the issue of Nov. 4th—11th, 1780, and also repeated subsequently, recorded: "Mr. Soubise Begs leave to acquaint the Gentlemen of the Settlement, that his Manege will be opened next Tuesday for the reception of Horses, and that he has changed his Fencing Days, to Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays." These notifications show that Soubise knew the use of polished language as deftly as he knew how to handle the polished steel, and combined in himself virtues which in those days of licentious living made it possible for histrionic excellence to go together with riding and fencing.

II

After three months, in March (17th.—24th) 1781, a correspondent who preferred to sign as C.D. addressed a long letter to the Editor of the *Gazette* which, on the one hand, sought to demolish the myth created by Sir William Jones about the unsurpassable beauty of Persian poetry and to assert the supremacy of Shakespeare's verse over that of Hafez, the Persian poet, on the other. The correspondent informed the editor in his mirthful prologue that he had chanced upon the following épigram published in a London Newspaper of the time on the city's two playhouses—those of Drury Lane and Covent Garden—where *Romeo and Juliet* had had an unusual run, belying all anticipations. "The town, Sir", he wrote, "had been very sufficiently satisfied with repeated exhibitions of the same piece, when the following lines made their appearance in one of the Morning Papers". The Epigram, notwithstanding the fact that brevity was not its soul, rang:

"Well what to-day says angry Ned
As up from bed he rouses
Romeo again and shakes his head
A pox of both your Houses."

The correspondent went on: "I know not Mr. Hicky, how it is that an Epigram has been so frequently compar'd to a Scorpion, unless it be that one as well as the other has been supposed to carry something like a fling in its tail.—And if it had not been for this single consideration I would have begged leave to have suggested a trifling alteration or two in the above Epigram, and then to have desired you to give it a place in the Bengal Gazette by way of hint to those generous creatures who have supplied us in such an abundant manner with apostrophe and paraphrase on the subject of the Persian poet Hafer and his lovely *Dulcinia*."

Then, after a few further lines of elaboration and banter, came the fling, i.e., the recommended alterations which were "Hafer" (the name at one place given in all caps reads HAFER; this obviously was to cover up the real name, that of the celebrated Hafez) for Romeo and "Noses" for Houses. The correspondent argued further: "Now Mr. Hicky, as it is no uncommon thing in these censorious days for the best institution to be artfully turned to the worst purpose, I will endeavour to convince you Sir and every admirer of the Persian poet Hafer, that I am neither tired of the bare mention ot the man nor of his manner of writing, and for this particular purpose, I hope you will be so obliging as to insert in the Bengal Gazette the followng translation of an Ode or song of that Divine Old Man's as it's done into English by Jones.

An Ode or Song of Hafer

"O Sweet Gale, thou bearest the fragrant scent of my beloved;

thence it is that thou hast this musky odour. Beware, do not steal; what hast to do with her tresses? O Rose, what art thou compared with her bright face? She is fresh and thou art rough with Thorns."

..."Now Mr. Hicky, having given you this translation of the Song of Hafer by that great Master of the Persian Language, Mr. Jones—I wish you wou'd do me the favour Sir to insert the following original Sonnet of our own Shakespeare's." He then quoted Sonnet No. XCIX (The forward Violet thus did I chide) in full, and immediately made a "Small transition from the comparative description of a lovely woman to a plain simple account of a poor inoffensive creature of later days"* The account, professed by the correspondent to have been written in the cause of everything that was beautiful, or good, or virtuous, endeavoured to immortalize a woman thus: "She is the most attracting form that ever died the death of Gentleness.—So soft of spirit.—An eye so borne down by modesty to the Earth.—Her eyelashes so silken—so curved..." etc. In presenting the three pieces of lyric emotion to the readers, the correspondent's intention was doubtless to establish the sovereignty of Shakespeare's verse which no composition before or since his time could have aspired to emulate, and he also prayed for the editor's verdict as to what the editor himself liked best, in this belief that such a verdict, should it be forthcoming, would have the thanks not only of one, but of "more than one thousand of the Gazette's unprejudiced" subscribers.

It is interesting to note here that the self-same Song of Hafez and the very same sonnet of Shakespeare's were set against each other by Sir William Jones in his "Essay on the Poetry of Eastern Nations" to demonstrate that "the Eastern Imagery is not so different from the European as we are apt to imagine". The Essay has been included in his small volume, "The History of Persian Language". This perhaps explains the impatience—or should we say the indignation—of the correspondent.

Shakespeare is quoted once again by the *Gazette* in its issue of the 1st-8th December 1781; this time to scoff at the proverbially conceited Caledonian, and who is there on earth who does not laugh in derision at the rather reluctant privilege of being exposed to merriment thrust upon him by the good-neighbourly English? The incidents relevant to this particular reference concerned a certain Scotsman who, on looking at a picture called *Jack Paradise Lost*, at first described it as remarkably delicate but suddenly swung back to his instinctive antipathy and declared that "it lukes like a Castrata." The comment in garbled punctuation and diction is in the words of Macbeth:

It is a Tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound
Spite and fury, signifying No—Thing.

III

Shakespeare continued to grow in esteem and popularity with the Calcutta theatre-goers, ultimately to become the Anglophile's dearest friend and philosopher. *Romeo and Juliet* was performed with great applause on the 23rd August, 1784, *The Merchant of Venice* on the 18th October following, and this news item, published on November 11 next, drew the footlights on yet another play of Shakespare's: "We hear the tragedy of 'Hamlet' will be performed in the course of next week; but the managers have thought proper to omit the farce of the "Mock Doctor". The *Calcutta Gazette*, while celebrating its anniversary on February 24th, 1785, found no finer words than those used by Hamlet to his players in reminding its patrons of the task the editors had assigned themselves; "To hold the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure."

There must have been some tantalizing gaps in the production of Shakespeare's plays in that year and the year following which elicited from the *Calcutta Gazette* the following anxious appeal (7th December 1786): "While we agree on the very accurate performance of the 'Critic'.....we cannot avoid suggesting, though with infinite deference to the Director of the Theatre...that the Tragedies of Hamlet....and Macbeth, stand very high in the public estimation, and that they anxiously hope to see him fill some of the principal characters in the Tragedies during the continuance of the cold season". However, *Richard III* was performed with 'well merited eclat' in January, 1788, and *The Merchant of Venice* returned to the stage on November 19th of the same year. This latter performance appears to have been witnessed by a very distinguished audience, the rôles enacted having been "accurate and spirited," "elegant and interesting" or feelingly dignified as the ruling emotion and temperament of the individual characters demanded.

IV

The last decade of the eighteenth century appears to have amused itself more with such coarse and jejune trifles as *Grecian Daughter, Duke and No Duke, Deaf Lover, The Little Trifler, The Agreeable Surprise*, etc. than with Shakespeare's poetic vision and the portrayal of cosmic strife in the soul of one individual. But that he was an aureoled presence with the lovers of the theatre is also equally undisputable. Browsing on the fascinating pages of the *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, I was struck by this news item published in its issue of April, 1798:

> "A violent fire broke out on Sunday evening, the 25th ultimo, in the market known by the name of Shakespeare's Bazar, at the corner of the Durrumtollah, which consumed a great number of huts, and destroyed considerable property."

The question that immediately suggested itself to my mind was, who could this Shakespeare be whose name was linked up with a Calcutta market? Could he be one of John Company's civil servants or was he just a nondescript member of the Settlement or was he the great Stratfordian? I delved into lists of contemporary civil servants and found some Shakespeares. One was C. Shakespear who signed documents as Sub-Secretary to the Government, Fort William, in 1793; another was J. T. Shakespear whose name appeared as a member of the Grand Jury, Supreme Court, in December 1804; yet another was H. Shakespeare, who was a staunch Orientalist and a member of the Educational Committee till 1837, and who also served at one time as its president. Of these three, the two last named drop out automatically, since they belong to decades subsequent to the exact year under review, thus leaving only the first named person to our present consideration. But could markets be named after a mere sub-secretary? Hardly likely. We are then left with the name of the Elizabethan playwright, Considering the facts that Shakespeare plays had grown into an attractive feature of Calcutta entertainments of the 18th century, that there were admirers of Garrick in Calcutta, and considering the fact that the name Shakespeare does not suit any local person, the surmise becomes plausible that the gutted market of Dhurrumtollah area had been named after the greatest literary genius of Britain. A curious way of honouring that genius, that of naming a bazar after him, but, for all we know, it might have been the most posh market of Calcutta (and therefore of India) of the late 18th century and was not therefore a mean pretext for the perpetuation of Shakespeare's name.

Yet another fine observation of the *Calcutta Monthly Journal* highlights Shakespeare's prestige in 18th century Calcutta. This was a comment on the construction of an attractive new fence to the Theatre (probably Calcutta Theatre). It read:

> This fence represents a view of Garrick's Villa, on the banks of the Thames, and the grounds adjacent; at a distance from the house is seen a small rotunda, in which it is said Garrick had placed a beautiful marble statue of Shakespeare. This view had consequently many recommendations in its favour: it represents the place where the first of English players dwelt, and where this master of the passions offered up his grateful sacrifices at the shrine of the immortal bard. We owe this Theatrical Ornament to the abilities of Mr. Morris, the Portrait Painter." (November, 1798).

In such admiring words and by such means as these the Hon'ble John

Company's Calcutta demonstrated its love of Shakespeare and his great histrionic interpreter, Garrick. Unluckily for us, this playhouse too, like its predecessors, was consumed by the flames.

V

The first quarter of the nineteenth century saw in Calcutta many of Shakespeare's plays enacted before crowded houses with as much success and applause as would flatter even a professional troupe. The plays presented include *Catherine and Petruchio* (Garrick's version of *The Taming of the Shrew*), *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *Richard III*, *Macbeth*. These performances were a splendid prelude to the more gorgeous and extensive presentations of his plays on Calcutta theatres, both private and professional, towards the middle and later decades of the century. this time not by Europeans alone but also by the new-grown Anglophile middle-classes of Bengal. With their emergence, the Hon'ble John Company's men were gradually forced to recede to the dimly-lit background of the city's amusement centres. To that prelude may be drawn a befitting *finale* by rendering here an account of a scene, marvellous alike in conception and execution, that greeted and delighted the guests at an entertainment given by Sir Charles Metcalfe in honour of the Rt. Hon'ble the Governor-General and the Countess Amherst on the 21st December, 1827.

"The company amounted to about 400 persons, comprising all the rank, beauty and fashion of Calcutta. In the course of the evening, a group of visitors made their appearance in the proper costume of the principal characters in Shakespeare's plays, led on by *Prospero*, and the rear brought up by *Dogberry*. On reaching the gorgeous pavilion where the Governor-General and his party were seated, *Prospero* delivered an appropriate address. The several personages in the group then mixed in the dance, exhibiting sundry amusing anachronisms. *Falstaff* led out a fashionable beauty of the *ancient regime*. The Ghost of Hamlet too might be observed holding converse with *Titania*, until scared a little by the sudden appearance of *Bottom*, who just brayed his approbation on the scene and then vanished. *Shylock* also, for a moment, forgot his bond and spoke to some lady whom he recognised; while *Henry VIII* addressed *Lady Percy*, and *Anna Boleyn* replied to some remark of *Dr. Caius*, who did not at all appear surprised to see *Oberon* treading on the toes of the vernacular *Dogberry*, or the haughty *Wolsey* holding a long confab with a jolly carter." (*The Good Old Days of Hon. John Company*, Carey, pp. 124-25).

* * *

Hats off then to the men of the Hon'ble John Company in Calcutta. Many of them were opportunists and adventurers and fortune-

hunters, some of them were extremely ill-educated and unprincipled, yet, by and large, they loved the theatre and loved the greatest figure of the English theatre world. Out of that love, they introduced Shakespeare into the distant world of Calcutta, and, in course of time, the passion for Shakespeare spread on to the Indian section of Calcutta's teeming population till, in the words of Rabindranath Tagore, "the palm groves by the Indian Sea raise their tremulous branches to the sky murmuring" the Bard's praise.

A CENTURY OF IMITATION :
A Study of Shakespeare's influence on Bengali Drama

RUDRAPRASAD SEN GUPTA

I

THE earliest original drama in Modern Bengali ('Kirtibilas', G. C. Gupta, modelled after *Hamlet*) was written in 1852, and Tagore, the greatest dramatist of our language, died in 1941. This period of nearly a hundred years witnessed the beginning of Bengali drama and its transition from infancy to youth. In the present paper, we shall attempt an assessment of the nature and scope of the Shakespearean influence on Bengali drama from the middle of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th.

Of all the factors leading to the emergence of Bengali drama, the Shakespearean influence was by far the most potent and significant. During the period between 1750 and 1850, the dramatist most frequently staged in different theatre-houses in Bengal (Calcutta Theatre, Chowringhee Theatre, Chandernagore Theatre, the Athenaeum, Dum-Dum Theatre, Baithakkhana Theatre, Kidderpore Theatre, Sans Souci Theatre) was Shakespeare. Significally enough, the first Bengali Theatre (the Hindoo Theatre, founded by Prasanna Coomar Tagore in 1831) opened with a performance of *Julius Caesar*. Producing Shakespeare became a fashion for the students of Hare School, Oriental Seminary and Hindu College. Shakespeare-culture was not limited to the theatre houses. The direct or indirect influence of Captain D. L. Richardson, H. H. Wilson, Alexander Duff, E. B. Cowell and others inspired in the students' mind an abiding interest in Shakespeare. A wide and deep interest in the staging and reading of Shakespeare prepared the necessary background and it was only a matter of time for a G. C. Gupta to write a play and to usher in Modern Bengali drama. It is only fair to maintain, in the light of such historical evidence, that but for the Shakespearean influence, the beginning of Modern Bengali drama might have been considerably delayed.

If Modern Bengali drama owed its origin to Shakespeare, its different stages of development were no less helped by the great master. In matter and manner alike, all the great dramatists of the last hundred years—

Michael Madhusudan Dutta, Dinabandhu Mitra, Jyotirindranath Tagore, Girish Chandra Ghose, Dwijendralal Ray, Amritalal Bose, Kshirode Prasad Vidyabinode, Rabindranath Tagore—always found in the Elizabethan dramatist something worth emulating. The debt of the first Bengali drama to Shakespeare has already been referred to. Even the lesser contemporaries like Kalipada Bhattacharjee, Lakshminarayan Chakravarti, Umesh Ch. Gupta, Upendra Nath Das and Rajakrishna Roy were more or less indebted to Shakespeare.

The first Bengali dramatist of real literary merit was Michael Madhusudan Dutt. Widely read in European literature, Madhusudan, discerned the general weakness of Bengali drama as the result of the fettering influence of Sanskrit drama. He looked to the West for inspiration. Of any direct influence on Madhusudan, Shakespeare had very little. Indirectly, however, the young man had much to learn from the Bard of Avon. In Madhusudan's drama, the use of blank verse, conception of character-tragedy, use of the 'comic' in tragedy and the introduction of certain technical devices were due considerably to the Shakespearean influence.

In *Sarmishtha*, Madhusudan clearly professed an 'intention to throw off the fetters forged by a servile admiration of everything Sanskrit.' But his success was only tentative. His next two farces also were altogether free from the influence of the master. In *Padmavati* (1860), for the first time, we notice a distinct influence of Shakespeare. Madhusudan always believed that 'no real improvement in the Bengali drama could be expected until blank verse was introduced into it.' This belief was worked upon in the dialogue of Kali. The influence of Shakespeare is writ large on much of *Krishna-Kumari* (1861). Madhusudan himself claimed to have wanted to create a 'Romantic Tragedy' in this play and the tragic conception here was much in the line of Shakespeare. The protagonist Bhima Singha marks a close resemblance with mad King Lear. Bullendra Singha is decidedly a counterpart of the Bastard in *King John*. Madanika's use of the sex-concealment device is doubtless in the model of Shakespeare and suited the practice of the Bengali theatre where, as in the Elizabethan theatre, boys played in female rôles. Further, the mixing of the 'comic' with the 'tragic' in this play is evidently Shakespearean. Madhusudan believed that 'the most beautiful plays in the world are combinations of Tragedy and Comedy.' Finally, there is a very interesting similarity between the two so far as the conclusions are concerned. No Shakespearean play closes at the intense tragic point. Before the final curtain, some character, less directly connected with the tragic issue, is made to speak some ten or twelve lines so as to restore the sense of the norm. The same purpose and method are evident in the closing words of Satyadas.

Dinabandhu Mitra was no less familiar with Shakespeare than

Madhusudan; quotations from Shakespeare are frequent in his plays. But the nature of Shakespearean influence on his dramas was always external and very much of the surface. It was almost always confined to situations or characters or theatrical conventions or patches of dialogue here and there. The most striking example of Dinabandhu's indebtedness to Shakespeare is to be found in *Nabin Tapasvini*. A complete episode (Hondol Kutkuteyr episode) with all but one character from *Merry Wives of Windsor* was borrowed in its entirety and faithfully reproduced in this play.

Jyotirindranath Tagore, a younger contemporary of Madhusudan and Dinabandhu, shared the characteristic nineteenth century admiration of Shakespeare. His translation of *Julius Caesar* is still one of the best in our language. Punarvasanta is a feeble work on the theme of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. *Asrumati*, however, is a maturer work in the Shakespearean line where the development of the theme as well as the conception of the chief characters bears the impress of *Othello*.

Of all the names connected with the late nineteenth century Bengali stage, Girish Chandra's stands supreme. A thorough knowledge of Shakespeare's art made Girish Chandra a staunch follower of the master. No wonder that much of his drama was marked by something unmistakably Shakespearean. His language, contrivence of situations, plots in patches, partial or total conception of many characters, use of a number of theatrical conventions, show how carefully Ghosh had studied his Shakespeare, Girish Chandra's dramatic language was turned after Shakespeare, especially his use of prose as the medium for coarse and common characters. Inspite of differences between the 'Gairish' measure and Shakespearean blank verse, the inspiration at the back of both was basically the same: to wring out the fullest dramatic capability of a language. Regarding dramatic material, Girish Chandra used Shakespeare in a way similar to that of Shakespeare's use of Plutarch or Cinthio or Holinshed. Sometimes he imitated the entire setting[2], sometimes he borrowed the thematic structure and assimilated it into the garb of some national mould[3]. Regarding transplantation of isolated situations from Shakespeare to his own dramas, Girish Chandra seldom missed the opportunity[4]. His characterization was no less influenced by Shakespeare than his themes. Certain types of character in Shakespeare powerfully attracted Girish Chandra. He was never tired of creating characters like 'Batul', 'Akal', 'Bidushak', 'Kanchuki'; Purnaram Bhat and Karim Chacha are modelled on the Shakespearean clown. Falstaff too influenced Girish Chandra's characterization more than once[5]. Partial resemblance between characters of Shakespeare and Girish Chandra is rather too very frequent. The close similarity between Leela (*Anand Raho*) and Lady Macbeth, Jana (*Jana*) and Queen Margaret, Lutfa (*Siraj-ud-doulla*) and Lady Percy, to name a few only, is difficult to ignore. Apart from all these,

Girish Chandra made a very free use of a number of Shakespearean devices. The appearance of a ghost in critical dramatic junctures in *Chanda* or *Kalapahar* is reminiscent of the Spirit of Hamlet's father or the ghost of the murdered Caesar. Use of the sex-concealment device by a number of Girish Chandra's characters was doubtless after the model of Shakespeare. Girish Chandra had little respect for Polonius's stricture on borrowing and he eagerly borrowed from Shakespeare. From the historical point of view, this influence was considerably successful. But it could never confer an abiding charm upon his plays. The devotee of Ramakrishna and the admirer of Shakespeare attempted a co-existence in his plays, but they did not mix well.

Dwijendralal Roy, a slightly younger contemporary of Rabindranath Tagore, made the freest as well as the finest use of Shakespeare in his dramas. His language, situations, themes, characters and a good many theatrical devices were considerably influenced by Shakespeare. D. L. Roy started his dramatic career by writing *Tarabai* in the medium of the Shakespearean blank verse. After much reconsideration he discarded the blank verse in favour of prose. The poetic flavour in his later prose-dramas was due mainly to his earlier experiments in the Shakespearean verse form. For dramatic material, D. L. Roy had constant recourse to Shakespeare. Small situations were taken up and readily assimilated into his dramatic texture. Sometimes he would be daring; he would take up a whole plot-sequence in its essentials from Shakespeare and graft on to it a native theme. The Shaeva-Satyabati episode in *Bhisma* is a replica of the 1st act, 2nd scene in *Richard III*. The thematic structure in *Tarabai* is an unabashed imitation of *Macbeth*. The whole situation confronted by Laila in *Nurjahan* reminds us of the similar situation in which the Prince of Denmark found himself. D. L. Roy's characterization betrays a much greater dependence on Shakespeare. The character of Lear must have been his great favourite for he has often invested his central characters with Lear-like passion[6]. Next to Lear, Hamlet fascinated D. L. Roy most. In some plays, he has derived most of his central characters from Shakespeare. In *Shah-Jahan*, the emperor's character, with its grandeur, irascibility and elemental passion provoked by filial ingratitude, are reminiscent of Lear's agony. The wit and idiocy of the Fool have been combined in the same measure in the character of Dildar. In addition to all these, D. L. Roy frequently resorts to the use of Shakespearean expedients, such as the use of the sex-concealment device, the device of hallucinations in critical junctures, the use of lyrics to heighten dramatic tension. Apart from such devices, D. L. Roy discerned the 'inner conflict' as the core of Shakespearean drama. In *Nur-Jahan*, he worked upon this principle and achieved a dramatic *tour-de-force*. D. L. Roy is possibly the truest adherent of Shakespeare we have in Bengali.

We come finally to Rabindranath Tagore. In the early Tagore-

dramas, Shakespeare's influence was active in various ways. A Sailabala (*Chira-Kumar Sabha*) would be disguised as a man ; sometimes a situation from Shakespeare would be introduced into his own drama without any alteration[7]; sometimes, the impress of Shakespeare is visible in the inner structure. His *Chira-Kumar Sabha* is a creation that breathes the atmosphere of Shakespearean highcomedy. *Sesh-Rakhsha* is a veritable comedy of errors. It is difficult to trace the Shakespearean influence in Tagore-drama in such a brief survey but this much can be safely said that the Shakespearean influence was quite active in Tagore's early dramatic writings. It is in the later plays that he outgrew the influence and worked with more contemporary technique and form.

II

From this rapid survey of a hundred years of Bengali drama, it should be obvious to the reader that the Shakespearean influence has been wide in scope and huge in dimension. Admittedly, Bengali drama has been immensely helped by this influence. But when we try to analyze the nature of the Shakespearean influence (without which no such study can be complete), something peculiar strikes us. We observe that the influence, with all its magnitude, has always been of the surface and rather external in its nature. It has almost always failed to effect any modification in the inner nature of the Bengali drama.

It is a historical fact that the inner world of Shakespeare, underlying the physical Elizabethan world, with its unimaginably wide variety and unfathomable profundity, transcends the bounds of time and place. The Shakespeare-universe indeed is a storehouse of eternal verities. Yet, the external physical world—the Elizabethan England—that clothes the inner world of Shakespeare is of a particular time and place and alien to our way of life. The two worlds—the inner and the physical—are blended by Shakespeare into such an artistic whole that the one refuses to be dissociated from the other. For Bengali dramatists this blend has been impossible; they have done little to capture the inward reality of Shakespeare and tried only to imitate the appearance in isolation. This inevitably has made the assimilation of Shakespeare into the texture of Bengali drama impossible. The second isurmountable barrier that has prevented Bengali drama from assimilating Shakespeare has been created by the difficulty of form. Every age has its own dramatic form. The only form that might be acceptable to the late nineteenth or early twentieth century Bengali drama was the Naturalistic, and every attempt to exploit the poetic form has gone against the spirit of the age. Bengali dramatists have actually conformed to the dictates of history and have insisted on the practice of Naturalism. But Shakespeare was their model and they overlooked the indissoluble relationship between form and content

in Shakespearean drama. They failed to perceive the truth that Shakespeare without poetry was little better than Holinshed or Cinthio or Plutarch. And in violation of this essential principle of dramaturgy, they borrowed Shakespearean material without any awareness that such material could not be artistically communicated through any form other than the poetic. Consequently their success has been only superficial and derivative.

References

1. Amritalal Bose and Khirodeprasad Vidyavinode were rather meagrely influenced by Shakespeare, although the influence was there. I have therefore omitted them from the author-wise discussion below.
2. *Swapner Phool* is indebted to M.S.N.D.; the conclusion of *Maner Matan* is borrowed from A.Y.L.; several scenes from *Jana* reproduce scenes from Coriolanus.
3. Compare the themes of *Siraj-ud-dowla* and *Richard* II.
4. Compare *Mir Kashim* and *Julius Caesar*, *Purnachandra*, *Basar* and *Merry Wives*, *Bishad* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Antony and Cleopatra*.
5. Compare Barunchand in *Mukulchand*, Jambubhoy in *Singhal Vijay*, Bisweswar in *Paraparcy*.
6. Cf. Govinda Singha in *Mewar Patan*, Singhabahu in *Singhal Vijay* and Bisweswar in *Paraparcy*.
7. The situation in *Visarjan* where Nakshatra Ray, speculating on his chances of kingship, realizes that the thought of being the king haunts his mind constantly.

SHAKESPEARE IN THE CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY

KRISHNA CHANDRA LAHIRI

I

In the days before the University

SHAKESPEARE perhaps came earlier to South India than to the North. In the Catalogue of Books in the Library of Fort St. George (Madras), September 1719, a few copies of Shakespeare's plays were admitted along with scriptural and theological works. To Calcutta Shakespeare was brought by the employees of the East India Company around the year 1780. With the introduction of English in this part of the country in the early 19th century, the study of Shakespeare was initiated in educational institutions. As the acquaintance of the local people with the English language increased, Shakespeare gradually extended his sway to areas of the city of Calcutta inhabited mostly by Indians. From Theatre Road (now, since 1964, re-named by the Corporation of Calcutta as Shakespeare Saranee, saranee meaning road) and Chowringhee *via* Lall Bazar, Shakespeare strolled on to something like a permanent abode in College Square. Admitted into the Fort William College and nurtured in its successor, the Hindu College, Shakespeare naturally got established in the academic world of Bengal. In the thirties, he passed as a familiar name on the lips of enlightened Bengalees and by the middle of the century, his place was firmly secured in the educational programme of Calcutta.

In the early 19th century, when English education was organized only by European and Anglo-Indian enterprise, Shakespeare's dramas formed a part of the curriculum at David Drummond's Academy at Dhurrumtollah, Sherborne's School at Chitpore, David Hare's School at Gol Dighi (College Square of today), the Reverend Duff's Institute at Hedua (Cornwallis Square of today), and Gour Mohan Adhya's Oriental Seminary at Chitpore—all centres of the new education in Calcutta. When afterwards English education ceased to be an affair mainly of the English-speaking minority and was taken up on a wide national basis, Shakespeare inevitably entered our schools in three ways. First, easy prose extracts or songs from the plays were included in the courses of reading; second, students were offered an acquaintance with the master's

works through simple prose narratives; and third, passages from the plays were selected for recitation by the boys. Some of the songs included in the text-books were Ariel's songs; in the third and fourth classes (corresponding to classes eight and seven of today), the students were initiated into the works of Shakespeare through the famous *Tales from Shakespeare* of Charles and Mary Lamb. Lamb's Tales (as the book is commonly called) used to be universally read in schools and outside, and was as popular among juvenile readers as Grimm's *Fairy Tales* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. For generations, teachers, students, scholars, and even those in society who did not make any particular claims to culture and education, took pride in declaiming the oration piece 'Friends, Romans, countrymen' with high flourish. It was Drummond who first taught schoolboys in Calcutta to recite Shakespeare. He encouraged his boys to display their histrionic abilities before guests at school functions at which some extracts from Shakespeare would invariably figure. A contemporary journal (*The Calcutta Monthly Journal*, 1828) praised the talents of a boy of Drummond's Academy in these words: "I have now to remark the singular phenomenon of a Hindu lad, named Kissen Chunder Dutt... only fourteen years of age...his correct pronunciation and action in the character of Shylock... drew forth the most enthusiastic admiration of the whole audience."

From Drummond's School the practice spread to other institutions. There could hardly pass any ceremonial occasion at which something from Shakespeare would not be included; among the favourite passages was Portia's homage to Mercy, Mark Antony's oration at Caesar's funeral, Shylock's outburst against persecuting Christians, and Hamlet's soliloquy on death. At these functions, the special prize awarded to the best reciter would invariably be a de-luxe volume of the complete works of Shakespeare, bound in morocco-leather.

As in European schools, so in colleges run by Europeans, Shakespeare found an easy access. The Fort William College, founded in 1800, which exercised a tremendous influence on the cultural life of Bengal, admitted Shakespeare into its curriculum. From these institutes, Shakespeare's triumphal passage to the Hindu College was but a matter of course. With the foundation of this centre of higher education in western literature and science on 20 January 1817, Shakespeare was formally adopted in Bengal's education. Krishna Mohan Banerjee, Rasik Krishna Mallik, Ram Gopal Ghosh, Tara Chand Chakravarti, Shiv Chandra Dev, Peary Chand Mitra, Ramtanu Lahiri and other young men who passed out of the Hindu College became whole-hearted disciples of Macaulay. They would repeat Macaulay's view that a single shelf of English literature contains an amount of knowledge which could not be found in all the works of India or Arabia. As Shivnath Sastri says, "From this group Kalidasa retired and Shakespeare was enthroned

in his place" (*Ramtanu Lahiri O Tatkalin Banga Samaj*, 1909, p. 154) In their days, Madhusudan Dutt and Rajnarain Basu had to study in the First Form (1843) as many as four plays of Shakespeare, viz., *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, and *Hamlet*. From the accounts, published in contemporary newspapers, of the annual prize-giving ceremonies of the Hindu College from 1825 to 1838, we find that every year the students used to recite from Shakespeare's plays. Here is one such report: "In the Prize Distribution function of the Hindu College some young students recited from memory, with excellent pronunciation, several parts from the poems of an English poet named Shakespeare." (*Samachar Darpan*, 20 February 1830.) At one such function, Madhusudan Dutt appeared in the rôle of the Duke of Gloucester in a scene from *I Henry VI*.

II

After the University was Founded

Many decades have gone by since Michael Madhusudan's days. Shakespeare still holds his ground in the undergraduate world of the Calcutta University although perhaps the curricular compulsion does not always necessarily endear him to the students. Over the years, at the Pass course level, the popular Shakespeare plays have been *As You Like It*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Tempest* among the comedies, and *Macbeth* and *Othello* among the tragedies. At the Honours level, Shakespeare is studied much more intensively, and the plays usually prescribed are *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Richard II*, *Coriolanus*, *Much Ado*, *The Comedy of Errors* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

After its foundation on 24 January 1857, the University of Calcutta remained for about half a century exclusively an affiliating and examining body. The idea of teaching and research at the postgraduate level was yet premature. Even the question of suitable books for study did not engage the attention of the University till 1881. The Board of Studies in English and other European Languages was appointed on 28 January 1882 and it prescribed a number of Shakespeare plays for the M.A. syllabus in English.

A selective survey of the courses of reading for the University's B. A. degree examination during the first fifty years gives us certain favourite Shakespeare titles: *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* (1858), *Julius Caesar* (1860), *King Lear* (1861), *King Lear* (1868: for the B. A. Honours degree course of the same year, we have, in addition, *Twelfth Night* and *Hamlet*), *Midsummer Night's Dream* (1869), *Julius Caesar* (1870), *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Henry V*, *Hamlet* (1890), *The Merchant of Venice*, *Macbeth*, *The Tempest* (1892), *Richard III*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Julius Caesar* (1894), *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Julius*

Caesar, *King John* (1895). *The Merchant of Venice*, *Macbeth*, *King John* (1896). *The Merchant of Venice*, *Macbeth*, *Henry V* (1897), *King John*, *Julius Caesar* (1905), *King John*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1908). The courses of reading for the M.A. degree in English included the following titles: *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *King John*, *King Henry VIII*, *Taming of the Shrew* (1890), *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, *King Lear* (1893), *Much Ado About Nothing*, *King Lear*, *Twelfth Night*, *Cymbeline* (1895), *Henry IV*, *Othello*, *Merry Wives of Windsor* (1897), *King Lear*, *Winter's Tale*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Henry IV* (1908).

It is interesting to note that during this period, the Sonnets, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Measure for Measure*, *All's Well*, *Timon of Athens*, works frequently prescribed nowadays (not only in the University of Calcutta but in other Indian universities as well), did not figure on the courses of reading. Tastes have changed.

For the B.A. examination of 1858, the paper-setter and examiner was William Grapel. He set a paper in which the candidates were asked (1) to give a rapid sketch, with dates, of Shakespeare's life; (2) to consider the probabilities as to the extent of Shakespeare's classical education; (3) to describe the sources of *Macbeth*; (4) to explain why the text of Shakespeare was unsatisfactory; and to comment on Schlegel's statement that Macbeth is the reverse of Hamlet. The examiners for the year 1905 were Messrs. C. R. Wilson and E. M. Wheeler. They required the candidates to (1) examine the national interest in *King John*; (2) show in what respects *King John* deviates from history; (3) compare the speeches of Antony and Brutus in the forum scene of *Julius Caesar*.

The Regulations framed under the Indian Universities' Act of 1904 provided opportunities for the expansion of the university from an examining agency to a centre of higher studies and original research. This led to the inauguration of the Department of Post-Graduate Teaching at the university and since the inception of post-graduate studies, English has occupied an important place among the subjects admitted to the Arts Faculty. Till 1948, Shakespeare was given a distinctive position in the M.A. syllabus in English. In one of five compulsory papers two or three Shakespeare plays, more tragedies than comedies, were prescribed for detailed study of the text; in one optional paper (viz., Elizabethan drama), Shakespeare was one of the authors representing the period and his plays were to be studied in the context of the dramatic types and tendencies of the age. In the current syllabus which was adopted in 1949, a whole obligatory paper has been set aside for Shakespeare; in this paper, four plays have to be studied in detail and about a dozen other plays (and also the sonnets or some other poem) are expected to be read as indications of the development of the mind

and art of Shakespeare; in addition, the students are expected to know the main outlines of Shakespeare lore and Shakespeare criticism. As the years pass, the range of study and discussion of Shakespeare widens perceptively; several significant editions (including Variorum paperbacks) are now available to the keen student who can compare, say, the New Arden with the New Cambridge, the text of Peter Alexander with those of C. J. Sisson and G. B. Harrison. Calcutta students, perhaps like students in all other places, have their favourites among Shakespeare critics, Bradley continuing to head the list, and the rhymester made use of Bradleyolatry for a witty verse:

I dreamt last night that Shakespeare's ghost
Sat for a Civil Service post;
The English paper of that year
Contained a question on *King Lear*,
Which Shakespeare answered very badly
Because he had not studied his Bradley.

III

The Teaching of Shakespeare in our University

That Shakespeare has come to be the best taught author in our colleges is due no doubt to the long tradition in Bengal and Eastern India of Shakespeare teaching and studies coming down in an uninterrupted stream for a century and a half. Since the foundation of the Fort William College in 1800 till the quartercentenary of Shakespeare's birth in 1964, his dramas have been taught in our colleges, and the interest in Shakespeare of people in and outside the academic world shows no sign of waning. Most of our distinguished Shakespeare teachers were gifted men and well-equipped scholars. The teaching of Shakespeare was necessarily academic, not supported and strengthened by any substantial experience of the stage context which, it has to be remembered, was the dramatist's chosen medium. During the greater part of the history of Shakespeare teaching in our country, there has not been any arrangement for stage representation of the plays in the manner of the Elizabethan theatre. Nor have phonographic records of performances by well-known actors been put to use for class work. Our teachers have all along sought to interpret the literary merit of Shakespeare's works independently of the stage or of any consideration of the background of the real, 'essential', Shakespeare. But in being interested primarily in the poetical and literary aspects of our author, we have not necessarily been losers all the while. The poetry of Shakespeare has left its deep imprint on the native poetical sensibilities of our youth. Our academic scholars generally, with very few exceptions,

have not been interested in the problems of the Shakespearean text. They read the version they find in any standard edition and accept it without many questions. Doubts of the Disintegrators have seldom troubled our Shakespeare scholars. Bardolatry is the common mood in the average Indian teacher. He would not admit of any flagging of Shakespeare's creative genius, any lapses in the Master's art or inspiration. To him Shakespeare is 'one of Nature's miracles, ageless and faultless.' Hence the tendency to romanticize Shakespeare in the class. And from these teachers, educated Indians have so far inherited the great nineteenth century tradition of romantic abandon in the matter of Shakespeare studies.

The difference in the atmospheres created in the Shakespeare classes of different teachers was due chiefly to their characteristic styles of Shakespeare teaching. Some, like Prof. P. C. Ghosh, were realistic and vivifying in their method: as they went on lighting their path across the pages of Shakespeare, the incidents and characters, the dramatic sequence and climax of action became living images. 'The spirits of the teachers were finely touched to fine issues. . : . Their lips were touched with a divine fire.' Then they would 'unlock the gates of Joy, Horror and thrilling Fears . . . and ope the sacred source of sympathetic Tears.' Others, like Prof. M. M. Ghosh, were visionary, creative artists: they would evoke a poetic atmosphere and carry the class along with themselves to Shakespeare's dream world. Most of them were inspired readers, and infected the students with their enthusiasm. The tradition of Shakespeare reading in our colleges has always encouraged oratorical recitation and memorizing jewels of phrases, expressions and passages from the text.

The best among our Shakespeare teachers have been inspiring in their reading and revealing in their interpretation. But the common run of our College Professors lecturing on Shakespeare are just plodding instructors. The average Shakespeare class is boring, if not mechanical. Particularly in the Pass Degree class, the teaching of a Shakespeare drama, like that of any other literature piece in the syllabus, e.g., a poem of Wordsworth or a novel of Hardy, has been more or less a matter of linguistic elucidation. The teacher anatomizes the prescribed text. He paraphrases speech by speech, line by line, gives synonyms of unfamiliar words,, explains difficult phrases, shows the relations of intricate clauses, amplifies compressions, illuminates subtleties in expression, clarifies grammatical irregularities, and interprets classical, biblical and historical allusions.

The whole system is inane and dry-bone. The dull, analytic method of teaching is clearly an indication of the loss of sensibility of our Shakespeare teachers to fine literary issues, and incapacity to make a fresh, original way of approach.

There is even occasionally an attempt on the teacher's part to translate the speeches into the mother tongue of the learner for better comprehension. This new method casually experimented in the class-room is being systematically followed in recent 'Notes' on Shakespeare's dramas, brought out by Indian publishing houses, by providing in the Appendix a full lucid translation of the entire play, scene by scene, and act by act.

Only rarely this process of dissection is varied by the teacher's casual comments on the dramatist's skill in constructing the plot, on Shakespeare's adherence to truth and naturalness in the conception of characters and working of their motives, or by quoting parallel passages from English and Indian literatures, or by flourishing hackneyed, ready-made theories, replete with literary jargons, from standard critical works.

Our earlier Shakespeare teachers had not at their disposal sufficient annotations and critical writing to help them in interpretation. Today both teachers and students have ample opportunities of drawing on the annotations by successive English editors and the vast bulk of Shakespearean criticism that has grown during the last half century. Critics like Dover Wilson and Wilson Knight, who used to be laughed at and ignored by people like Professor P. C. Ghosh, are now universally accepted, and new names like Eliot and Empson are receiving respect and recognition. Shakespeare is no longer, as in the nineteenth century, being regarded as a true painter of life in his drama; in the twentieth century Shakespeare is being looked upon as 'the creator of his own world which he has put into human nature vibrating with passion.' 'But it is a pity that older names like Coleridge and Hazlitt, fine pieces of criticism by Goethe, Victor Hugo, Georg Brandes, Anatole France, and Bernard Shaw are little cared for these days'. With what zest Prof. P. C. Ghosh, in characterizing Shakespeare's style in *Antony and Cleopatra*, used to quote Coleridge's expression, 'Happy valiancy'!

The students are oftener than not fed on lectures reproducing second hand views. There is hardly any scope for and encouragement of free discussion between the lecturer and the students on the niceties and beauties of Shakespeare's drama. This results from the undue emphasis, put both by the teacher and by the taught, on the examination. The mediocre teacher laboriously 'tries all devices to rouse the students' examination interest and generally shows them the short-cut to success. He draws attention to a passage here and another there which is likely to be set for explanation in the University examination. After having skipped a few pages, he would put the finger on a line which is pointed out as important for the allusion it contains. He is full of shrewd guesses at probable questions they may be asked to answer in their final examination, and circumspectly advises them to rely on bazar notes or cram those which sometimes he kindly dictates from his

saw-dusty collection. And the serious-minded value this note-giving type of Shakespeare teacher. 'They take meticulous note of everything said in the hope and belief that all this would stand them in good stead in the examination..... They are not perhaps far wrong'.

It has to be admitted with regret that our approach to Shakespeare is often un-Shakespearean. There is evidently not the urge to realize him in and through living experience, but a fruitless endeavour to grasp him in academic shibboleths and abstractions. We pay our homage to him not by accepting and elevating life itself sympathetically, but through our accustomed ways of elucidation and analysis, criticism and commentary. This is definitely shunting away from the Shakespearean way of grasping life in its immediate intimacy.

That in India today Shakespeare is receiving an 'ever deeper and wider appreciation' is to a large measure due to the contribution of generations of eminent teachers. They have played a most significant rôle in the process of popularizing and creating an abiding interest in Shakespeare's dramas. The varied talents of the brilliant Shakespeare teachers, who distinguished themselves in the academic world of Bengal during the last hundred years, live in the memory of their innumerable students, a few of whom are still with us. Occasionally at Old Boys' Reunions or in Commemoration Volumes they revive their happy reminiscences, recall the personalities and eccentricities of their beloved and revered masters, and tell each other haunting tales of how they used to be amused and entertained by the teachers' distinctive ways of reading and acting Shakespeare's plays, or how much they would be edified and inspired by their rare interpretations of Shakespeare's poetry. Thus they enjoy recreating, for a while, the mental climate and atmosphere of the Shakespeare classes of their student days. With what relish and how much wistfulness do they imitate the old teachers' high-pitched declamation and perfect pronunciation, sonorous voice and haunting intonation in reciting famous Shakespeare passages like

'To be or not to be that is the question',
'All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players',
'Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd? ',
'Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow',
'Let Rome in Tiber melt',

And so on.

There has been an almost unbroken succession of highly gifted Shakespeare teachers in the institutions affiliated to the University of Calcutta. In colleges under government, missionary, and private management, a noble galaxy of reputed scholars taught Shakespeare. Quite a number of them, teaching in Bengal, earned all-India fame, and, being highly revered by generations of students, passed into legends.

The Presidency College and its predecessor, the Hindu College, can be justly proud of their great Shakespeare teachers: Richardson, Sterling and Holme, Percival, M. M. Ghosh and P. C. Ghosh. The General Assembly Institute and its successor, the Scottish Churches College, can claim Dr. Scrimgeour, a Scotchman, and Professor Owen, an Australia-educated Welshman, as great Shakespeare teachers, both in dramatic and in interpretative ways. In St. Xavier's College, Father Crohan, an Anglo-Indian with Irish heredity, was very thorough in the study of Shakespeare's text. Principal Wheeler, another Anglo-Indian, distinguished himself in the district town of Berhampore.

The Vidyasagar College stands high in presenting renowned Shakespeare teachers purely native. It had on its staff at least three luminaries: Professors J. L. Banerjee, Lolit Kumar Banerjee, and Kunja Lal Nag. Principal Rabindra Narayan Ghosh and Professor Janaki Nath Bhattacharya of the Ripon College were other stalwarts among successful Shakespeare teachers.

IV

Some Memorable Teachers

The tradition of great teaching and scholarship still goes on unimpaired but the duty of paying homage to the teachers of today we must leave to the students of today who, we do not doubt, when they grow middle-aged and find occasions to review their indebtedness to their teachers, will do justice to the worthiness of today's teachers. In the present essay, we shall confine ourselves to brief comments on some of the great Shakespeare teachers of the past in Calcutta.

David Lester Richardson. Captain Richardson's name has passed into a legend in the history of Shakespeare teaching in Bengal. An army man to begin with, he joined the Hindu College in 1835 as a Professor of English and eventually rose to be the Principal of the College; his fame rests on his inspired reading, clear elucidation and original criticism. From all accounts his Shakespeare reading was animated. It was the memory of such forceful reading that prompted Macaulay to write to the professor: "I may forget everything about India, but not your reading of Shakespeare, never." Richardson's zeal in Shakespeare studies exercised a healthy influence on the eager student community of the day. Inspired by his teaching, his pupils went beyond the mere reading of the text, they were encouraged to recite and act the plays, and were even stimulated to original composition in their mother tongue. One of his pupils thus stimulated was the great Michael Madhusudan Dutt, the poet of the Bengalee Renaissance of the nineteenth century.

H. M. Percival

After Richardson, the study and teaching of Shakespeare revived specially when the University of Calcutta was established. Much excellent work must have been done by many teachers of Shakespeare but it is not until we reach the present century that we meet really great and memorable teachers. We begin with the greatest of them, H. M. Percival, a teachers' teacher and a scholars' scholar, a true Indian whose academic achievements in the universities of Oxford and London were of the highest order. One of Professor Percival's pupils was Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, a very great teacher of Shakespeare himself, who paid moving tributes to the many-sided talents of his master in the Silver Jubilee Number of the Presidency College Magazine. In 1912, Sir Asutosh Mookerjee invited Professor Percival, who was then living in retirement in England, to return to the university, take over the headship of the postgraduate department of English and organize it. Professor Percival was unable to accept the offer on grounds of indifferent health but his contacts with the university and especially with the Presidency College continued till the end of his life. Professor Percival brought to bear upon his Shakespeare studies a vast erudition which was almost encyclopaedic, an unfailing instinct for beauties of literature, and a mastery of precise words and phrases. There was nothing dogmatic about his scholarship. 'He was never shy of owning himself in the wrong.' Speaking of his lectures in the past on Shakespeare, he was not slow to confess that he had "often overlooked and misunderstood things." Of Percival's power in interpreting, the best assessment is by his pupil, Prafulla Chandra Ghosh: "What shall I say of his interpretation of poetry and specially of Shakespeare! It revealed to us a new world of beauty and thought into which the profane herd of critics were never allowed to intrude... A philosopher in outlook, he perhaps overemphasized the ethical import of Shakespeare's plays, but in his interpretations he often hit the mark nearer than many of the present day critics to whom only the play is the thing and everything else nothing."

Regarding critics and criticism of Shakespeare, Percival did not much care to know what other people had thought about his favourite author. In 1926, on receiving from P. C. Ghosh three well-known books on Shakespeare, including Bradley's justly popular lectures, Percival wrote back: 'I had seen none of these before and was uneasy whether they might not upset me and my notions. They have not done so.' One of these books he facetiously characterized as 'the product of a grasshopper mind. It hops without reason or rhyme, and neither reason nor rhyme nor common sense of common men can guess whither, how far, how high the next hop will be. It hops out of the subject, takes many hops before it returns to the subject, and then hops out of it again'.

On Croce's chapter on Shakespeare Percival remarked more favourably: 'Croce I can not be hard upon, for one reason, but a reason that is all sufficient; it is this—he says that Shakespeare is to be judged by our emotions; and one who tries to judge him so, has a claim to indulgence for any faults, His biggest fault is that he forgets own standard and becomes metaphorical now and then.'

Percival appreciated Bradley's laborious study, though rather effusive: 'So is Bradley now and then, without rising to any height that Croce reaches. Bradley is painstaking, has read Shakespeare carefully, draws his conclusions conscientiously; but what he so draws and states might have been stated more effectively in one-fourth of the space he takes up'.

He even detects a few lapses in Bradley's critical judgements and falls foul upon the latter's scientific tests: "He does not understand the minor characters in *Macbeth* and he misunderstands the scene between Macduff and Malcolm. I see he uses those crutches, the Tests (down to decimals on the subject of 'stopped' and 'unstopped' I think)—crutches that people who can walk reverently on their own two legs behind Shakespeare, should disdain to use".

J. C. Scrimgeour

For thirty years on the staff of Duff College (1896-1908) and Scottish Churches College (1908-1925), Dr. J. C. Scrimgeour was the greatest Shakespeare teacher of these institutions. He was loved and respected by his students who felt his death in a Calcutta hospital as nothing short of a personal bereavement. His name was so closely associated with Shakekspeare teaching that for his students it is difficult to think of a Shakespeare class without Dr. Scrimgeour or of Dr. Scrimgeour without a Shakespeare class. He founded the Calcutta Shakespeare Association, now defunct, and was its first President. It did much, through his earnest endeavours, in arousing genuine enthusiasm for Shakespeare study in this part of the country. The proceedings of the Association were enriched by his inspiring discourses and contributions.

Dr. Scrimgeour had many of the lovable attributes of the proverbial scholar; his carelessness about his dress and absentmindedness often amused his students. At the beginning of every class he felt nervous, and in the large classes experienced much difficulty with his voice, which was rather husky; but his students soon got over this deficiency in recognition of the high value of his lectures on Shakespeare. A man of vast erudition and rare intellectual attainments, he made a special and scrutinizing study of Shakespeare. In depth of scholarship in Shakespearean lore, he had hardly any rival in this part of India. He was so thoroughly conversant with the text of the dramas that 'it was disastrous to misquote Shakespeare in his presence. He would set one

right even with a preposition, ... though the passage might be one of little note and unlikely to be remembered by quite diligent students of the dramatist.'

Teaching Shakespeare was to him not simply a calling but a veritable passion. Though occasionally doing Milton or other English authors, he was particularly fond of teaching Shakespeare. He would enter his Shakespeare class bubbling over with enthusiasm, and in no time, that is, after a hurried roll-call, threw himself into his task with full vigour. Equally loyal to Shakespeare and the Church, he found a way to blend his two interests, and requisitioned his literary gifts in his missionary work. And often he would use Shakespeare to illustrate his scripture lessons in a wonderfully effective manner. He could reconcile his innate Scottish patriotism with Shakespeare's aggressive Englishness'. 'His affection for Scott, though abounding, was influenced by points of similarity with Shakespeare', which could not escape his observation.

His reading sometimes rose above recitation to the level of stage-acting to which he seemed to attach a great value 'as an aid or supplement to teaching drama'. On occasions he made the students join with him in acting. 'Not that he had any conspicuous histrionic tallent' ; but acting was valued by him because of the limitations of the class-room lectures to make a picture real. He wished he could teach the secene in the proper dramatic surroundings. 'He acted so vivaciously and with such sincerity that he did not fail to enhance the students' understanding.'

E. M. Wheeler:

The Reverend E. M. Wheeler was the only child of Monomohini, the educated daughter of Rev. Krishna Mohan Banerjee of the Christian Church at Hedua, Calcutta, who had been one of the foremost pupils of the nineteenth century European teachers like David Hare and D. L. Richardson. Wheeler learned with equal interest both the literature and the philosophy of the West. He started as a lecturer in Philosophy at the Hooghly College, and then became Professor of English literature at the Bangabasi College. Maharajkumar Manindra Chandra of Berhampore came under his tutorship in Calcutta, and this connection led to Wheeler's appointment as the Principal of Krishnanath College, Berhampore.

Wheeler taught mainly Shakespeare and Wordsworth. While lecturing he never sat on the chair, but used to stand on the platform or move about in the class room. The Bengali poet, Kalidas Roy, in his article contributed to the Centenary Volume of the Krishnath College, speaks of Wheeler teaching them *The Merchant of Venice* and Raleigh's *Shakespeare*. On the latter Wheeler commented : 'Such a book should not have been included in your syllabus. For those who have not read the dramas of Shakespeare this book is Hebrew. It would

have been more proper in the Honours course'. Before studying Raleigh's book in the class, he read out Shakespeare's chief dramas for two months. Only after this reading of the original dramas, he taught Raleigh's critical volume.

As to Wheeler's method of teaching Shakespeare, he seldom came to details of the text for elaborate explanation, but he aimed rather at analyzing the general trend of the thought contents and at pointing out the niceties of aesthetic appeal. Much interest was added to his scholarly exposition by his ready wit and humour. The charm on the audience was complete and the students listened spell-bound.

Wheeler continued the Richardson tradition of lively Shakespeare reading. It had distinct histrionic accents and the intonation of acting on the stage. His zest and passion in reading helped the students substantially to understand and appreciate Shakespeare.

No less iilluminating was Wheeler's interpretation of Shakespeare's text. Before reading an act of a Shakespeare play he gave a preface, and, on finishing the act, gave his commentary. His criticism always proceeded from his personal views, independent of what critics had said on the matter in hand. Once at his unconventional interpretation of a particular passage in the class, a student remarked that such an explanation was not in conformity with the interpretations of accepted English commentators like Verity and Deighton. 'Well', he replied, 'I do not know what your commentators have said. But why do you think me smaller than those commentators? I too am a commentator. As I was not born on the English soil and my words do not appear in print, my interpretation does not strike you as proper'.

L. K. Banerjee:

Professor Lolit Kumar Banerjee of Vidyasagar College was a successful Shakespeare teacher, who brought his high literary acumen and taste, displayed fully in his Bengali writings mostly of a critical nature, to bear upon his Shakespeare studies.

Professor Banerjee had no histrionics, yet he put across to the students Shakespeare the dramatist. As he taught in the class he seemed to be absorbed in the dramatic atmosphere, and 'would not tolerate even the slightest interruption by way of a whisper or smile, when he was interpreting a very sombre or grave aspect in the drama'. He succeeded in recreating Shakespeare's imaginative world in the class, and the students seemed to hear the characters speaking before them. His manner of dignified presentation kept the whole class in animated suspense for an hour.

He realized too that creative literature can be best approached through the reader's mother tongue, and in teaching Shakespeare to an undergraduate class full of Bengalee boys, he was given to habitually

using Bengali synonyms and renderings, wherever necessary; and he translated extempore in the class famous Shakespearean passages into apt Bengali expressions. This creative, natural interpretation through the native language never failed to bring a living touch to Shakespeare's richly imaginative literature.

K. L. Nag:

Professor Kunja Lal Nag, a member of the teaching staff of the Vidyasagar College, enjoyed a great reputation as a teacher of English literature, particularly as a Shakespeare-lover, and died in harness, when he had gone half-way through a Shakespeare tragedy in his class.

Neither in physical appearance nor in dress and manners did he look like a typical Professor of English of his day. He was not a tall figure in immaculate European costume, but rather slightly built, short to medium in stature, clothed unostentatiously in *dhoti*, and could well be mistaken from his appearance and bearings for a Sanskrit Pundit.

Professor Nag was singular by his reading of Shakespeare rather than for his scholarship. While teaching in the class, he seemed to be immersed and saturated in the spirit of Shakespeare's drama.

Though Professor Nag's voice was not loud or powerful, histrionics were in his nature. He 'had a real sense of the drama, and slowly and gradually as he went on reading and explaining the text, sometimes mildly gesticulating, he succeeded in re-enacting the scenes vividly before the eyes of the students, at times using homely Bengali words in mimicry to spice the description of some humorous episode or situation'. He used to show in practice that the true nature of a Shakespeare drama is revealed in acting. At intervals of teaching in the class he used to demonstrate how a particular scene should be acted. His students were much amused at his histrionics in the witches scene in Macbeth. He used to wrap himself in his *chaddar* to appear as a witch, started chewing nuts of which he had a supply in his pocket that day, and muttered the witch's words.

J. L. Banerjee:

'Prof. J. L. Banerjee will take his class to-day'—whether or not such an unusual notice was ever issued, it was a standing joke among his own students at the Vidyasagar College as well as those from other institutions in Calcutta who flocked to hear Professor Jitendra Lal Banerjee's lectures on Shakespeare. It is true that, a busy man with numerous calls on his time and attention, he failed, on many days, to turn up, to the great disappointment of the students who assembled in the class. 'In those days there was a romantic halo around the name of Prof. J. L. Banerjee. His reputation as a scholarly teacher of English

became a byword with the student community in Bengal.' And to the people at large he was known as a powerful platform speaker.

No less impressive and forceful when lecturing on any other subject, provided it gave free scope to his gift of eloquence, he particularly excelled in the rôle of an exponent of Shakespeare's dramas. Out of sheer passion for teaching Shakespeare he monopolised for himself all the Shakespeare plays that are usually prescribed in the Pass and Honours Degree courses.

A stalwart figure with a roundish beaming face and a rather small nose, he looked like a Roman. His mental powers were no less large. To a highly capacious Greek intellect he brought an extremely alert and responsive imagination in the task of vivifying Shakespeare's world before the class. A rare mastery of the English language and the flowing style in which he normally couched his ideas further facilitated his work as a teacher.

But with all these varied personal equipments of head and heart, he was a man of perfectly unassuming manners, and there was nothing forbidding about him. With all his serious preoccupations, he was essentially a man of good humour, constantly laughing and bubbling over with jokes.

He did not at all indulge in histrionics for producing effect on the audience. But a famous public orator as he was, his magnificent elocution always made Shakespeare alive to the students. Particularly his reading of great passages of passion became an unforgettable experience for the listeners. At such tense moments he would speak in a curious, penetrating sort of whisper which had a thinking quality in it. The reading itself would be an illuminating interpretation. He would not pause to explain in detail difficult words or passages. And all sorts of problems in Shakespeare scholarship, which receive much attention today, were altogether left out by him. Variant readings, assessment of source materials, determination of dates, consideration of authenticity and interpolation—these features of the critical apparatus did not normally appear important to him. Textual criticism, though not totally ignored, was just hurriedly touched upon by him.

Prof. Banerjee showed scant regard for what he called 'books about books', and he always asked his students never to accept the ready-made valuations of Shakespeare's works by critics, however eminent. While teaching in the class, he never made any reference to the numerous publications in Shakespeare criticism of which students are so enamoured. And Prof. J. L. Banerjee's editions of Shakespeare's dramas, unlike similar Indian publications, give his own exposition, without ever seeking any support from the interpretations of other critics.

M. M. Ghosh:

Professor Mono Mohan Ghosh, reputed as being in the front rank

of Indian writers of English verse, was also a successful teacher of English poetry and drama at the Presidency College.

He did not teach Shakespeare as a rule, but occasionally he did a Shakespeare play, e.g., *The Tempest*, in the Honours class.

Prof. M. Ghosh's reading of Shakespeare's drama was neither histrionic nor oratorical; but it never failed to attend to the musical quality of Shakespeare's language. The full value of every vowel and of every consonant was stressed with the virtuosity of a true poet. He successfully conveyed to his listeners the rich word-music of Shakespeare's poetry. His reading of the poetic passages in Shakespeare's drama was thus particularly refreshing.

His interpretation of a Shakespeare drama was neither an explanatory textual analysis, as that of a pedagogue, nor a realistic life-projection, as that of an actor. It was purely a poetic interpretation. Essentially a poet himself, he was primarily touched by the poetry of the play, and it was this poetic quality in Shakespeare's drama that he sought to convey to his listeners.

Imaginatively high-strung and tense as he always remained, his reading and interpretation were a revelation to his students. The opening scene of *The Tempest*, as he read it, took up colour and tone from the poet's mind. Caliban's earth poetry, Ariel's delicate, airy fancy, and the warm country-side atmosphere of the masque were rich experiences for his listeners. Above all, the felicity of his phrasing rendered Shakespeare's text absolutely transparent.

Prof. M. Ghosh sought to relive Shakespeare's creative experience. Instead of the objective Shakespearean drama being re-enacted, the subjective Shakespeare used to be revealed. The poet in M. Ghosh would recreate the drama in his own artistic experience; he would enter the inmost soul of the drama, but his entry was the admission into the work of an artist by another artist, sympathetic and similarly minded. He himself possessed poetic powers of a high order; so when he took up a poem or a play of superior aesthetic qualities, he could not remain satisfied with tasting its beauty from outside, with the reader's mind, but would be keen on entering it with the creator's mind, and to realize deeply how the work originated and from which emotion or feeling. Hence, while teaching a Shakespeare drama, he would, leaving the students outside, enter the artist's inner world, and proceed therein, displaying the dramatist's artistic skill, character-portrayal, and evolution of the plot.

P. C. Ghosh:

Professor Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, universally known as P. C. Ghosh, was an institution in himself. Who, that had the privilege of sitting at his feet, does not remember his beaming 'cherubic face and

fiery temperament'? During the first four decades of the present century his was a resplendent figure inalienably associated with Shakespeare teaching at the Presidency College and in the Post-graduate Department of the University of Calcutta.

The Centenary Volume of the Presidency College describes him as 'the greatest teacher of English in the annals of the Presidency College: had far-reaching scholarship, amazing mastery of English, and incomparable teaching abilities.' Great as a teacher of English literature and language, he was greater as a Shakespeare teacher and scholar, perhaps the greatest after his own teacher, H. M. Percival. While he 'breathed life into any topic or author he was asked to teach, whether it was poetry or philology, Chaucer or Milton, the Bible or Lytton Strachey, it was on Shakespeare that he reached the peak of his form and gave to generations of students an experience that can only be described as wonderful'.

As a Shakespeare teacher Prof. P. C. Ghosh combined the best of H. M. Percival with the best of D. L. Richardson, and added something distinctly his own. He imbibed the latter's art of marvellous Shakespeare reading and inherited the former's power of masterly textual interpretation, and both these traits were sustained and enriched by a perfect projection of a lively personality and wit into his teaching.

Teaching was a dedication to him; he took a keen relish in the poetry of Shakespeare's drama. He was always to be found there at the door-step of the class room punctually with the ringing of the bell, and would continue lecturing long after the hour was over. Hence in the University he insisted on having his Shakespeare class in the last period in the day's time-table, so that he could extend his class freely beyond the scheduled hour. This was the rule rather than exception which came occasionally in the shape of extra four-hour classes on Sundays and holidays. Sometimes he would take his Shakespeare class in the Science Block of the Presidency College, and with the help of a Laboratory Assistant had pictures from illustrated editions of Shakespeare's dramas projected on the wall for the edification and amusement of his students.

Prof. P. C. Ghosh possessed a rare gift of reading Shakespeare's text in an essentially dramatic style. By his sheer recitative skill he brought each character and situation to life, always with subtle variations of intonation to suit the particular speaker or occasion. He would 're-enact the scenes with a vividity that would be the envy of any actor.... By the modulation of his voice, the glint of his eyes, and the expression of his face, the inner soul of each character would be laid bare'. And this powerful reading naturally proceeded from his genuine sense of drama, he himself being a good mixer among men. His capacity for feeling and emotional frankness, for tears as much as for

laughter, was remarkable. Hence teaching Shakespeare was for him either a hilarious fun or a moving experience of tragedy.

The effiect of Prof. P. C. Ghosh's Shakespeare reading on his listners was unfailing. He would keep an entire class spell-bound for hours and hours. In the current of his reading the minds of the students would be swept along and enabled to relive the experiences of the characters. All felt as if he was acting successively in the rôles of the several men and women, and the dialogue spreading out through the interpretation, made these characters larger and more vivid. 'When he recited Macbeth's speeches, the students would, along with him, become Macbeth ; they would become Lady Macbeth when he acted her part, or Shylock when he read Shylock's speeches'. It was Shakespeare-cum-Ghosh, Shakespeare reflected in the mirror of the master's mind that his pupiils saw and felt, admired and were thrilled by.

The strongest point in Prof. P. C. Ghosh's Shakespeare teaching was his concentration on the text. And in this interest in textual exegesis he possibly followed Percival. His students may still remember their first informal Shakespeare lesson with P. C. G.—'On entering the class room he announced that he would take up "this book" and immediately started reading the first line' of the prescribed text.

A great expert in textual scholarship, he was always confident of his knowledge of Shakespeare's text. If ever in doubt, he would consult the Folio and Quarto headings and ransack all source books. North's *Plutarch* and *Holinshed's Chronicle* were ever by his side for comparison with Shakespeare's text. 'He would go to the trouble of getting a copy from Britain of Colet's *Grammar* which was mentioned by Lamb, although that had not been reprinted for years'. He devoted himself so meticulously to textual matters in the belief that the establishment of an accurate reading is an essential pre-requisite to the proper understanding of the Shakespearean text.

In the matter of interpretation Prof. Ghosh never depended on the editors and commentators, nor indulged in theories, systems, and 'isms' of any school. He seldom made any reference to Shakespeare criticism and critics. He followed his own line of interpretation with a down-to-earth common sense, which was almost like Johnson's whom he greatly admired. His 'meticulous concern for the meaning of words, aided by his illuminating comments' casually dropped, secured a most marvellous exposition of the text. One who has studied a Shakespeare drama with Prof. P. C. Ghosh and also read Percival's annotated edition of the same play, is inclined to believe that he surpassed his teacher in interpretation.

The brief account given above of the enthusiasm for and study of Shakespeare's work in the educational world of Calcutta should offer some indication of the impact of Shakespeare on the Bengalee mind. This

impact has had far-reaching results on the creative literature of Bengal and requires to be examined carefully and at length. Shakespeare continues to be studied in the Calcutta University and today, as in the past, there are inspiring scholars and teachers, men and wisdom and learning who have contributed significantly to the corpus of Shakespeare criticism. Of such teachers and critics it will be the duty of today's students to write when they grow up.

Materials Used

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Articles, letters, or radio talks of the following gentlemen:

Professor P. K. Guha, Principal P. K. Basu, Prof. D. N. Ghosh, Principal A. L. Ganguli, Dr. Sitansu Maitra, Prof. J. N. Chakravarti, Prof. P. Ghosal, Prof. A. D. Mukherjee, Prof. Bishnu Dey, Dr. Parimal Roy, Sri Hiranmoy Banerjee, Sri Sudhangshu Mohan Banerjee, Sri Amal Mitra, Sri Phani Bhusan Chakravartti, Sri Binode Chandra Sen.

SHAKESPEARE SOCIETIES IN CALCUTTA

SITANSU MAITRA

To Girish Chandra Ghosh goes the credit for the first attempt at giving Shakespeare, uncut and undiluted, to Shakespeare-lovers of Calcutta and that too in the spoken Bengali of Calcutta of those days. This was in 1893. *The Minerva* got off to a chequered start with *Macbeth*, Girish Chandra himself personating the tyrant and making of his job such a success that the then editor of the *Englishman* thought it fit to publish a wry appreciation : "A Bengali Thane of Cawdor is a lively suggestion of incongruity, but the reality is an admirable reproduction of all the conventions of an English stage". No doubt the clever editor had previously procured the information that Girish had availed himself of the help, advice and active co-operation of some skilled Europeans in the city. The great actor spared no pains to put Shakespeare across to the Bengalees in their own speech but the enterprise collapsed after ten nights of *tour de force* and Girish could keep it up *a tour de bras*. But are we to take it that only the English-speaking section of Calcutta patronized the English theatre in the metropolis, the earliest references to which are to be found in the famous *Hickey's Gazette*? And we find notices about Shakespeare performances in *the Theatre* in this gazette as early as 1780.

In the opening year of the present century was founded at 10 Ananda Chatterji Lane, Calcutta, the first ever Shakespeare Society in the East with the professed aim of studying and staging Shakespeare. Its Founder-Secretary was the well-known society entertainer, Satish Chandra Mukherji, popularly known as the "Funnyman". He was a good actor himself and his English speech sounded perfectly English even in Englishmen's ears. His house, with a permanent stage inside, became the rendezvous of the Shakespeare lovers of the city and a new enthusiasm for 'Shakespeare in his own tongue' was noticeable at a time when the native drama itself was making remarkable headway. Mukherji's *aide* was Prafulla Chandra Ganguli, son of the illustrious Kadambini Ganguly, the first woman graduate of the Calcutta University. This society held regular sittings and presented Shakespeare's plays in the auditorium of the 'Sangeet Samaj' in Kailash Bose Street. Plays were also put on boards in the Corinthian and the Empire Theatres. These occasions were somewhat like Shakespeare festivals relished equally by natives and foreigners.

Mukherji's chief interest was the production of Shakespeare plays. Amateurishness was not his way. So serious were the two friends about their 'new love' that they got admitted in the newly established School of Elocution founded by Madame Vivian Dagmar and the well-known Violinist Philip Sandré. Mukherji learnt the arts so well that on the stage none could know him for a Bengali. This proficiency of his often led him to ridicule those who aped English speech and manners but in meetings and assemblies posed as patriots. It was during the heyday of Funnyman's Shakespeare Society that noted Shakespearean actors like Alan Wilkie and Matheson Lang came to Calcutta with their troupes. This first Shakespeare society became defunct with the demise of S. C. Mukherji. At about this time another and a second Shakespeare Society was announced but it is doubtful whether it was formally established. Professors Scrimgeour and Prafulla Chandra Ghosh are said to have taken the initiative in the matter. In 1919 (1920?) this Society held its first meeting. The editor of the *Statesman* presided. Nothing else is known about this body but a few facts have come to us about another attempt to popularise Shakespeare to college students by a once famous organization set up about the beginning of this century. This was the Dawn Society, founded by Satish Chandra Mukherjee of revered memory (not the 'Funnyman' though the name is the same) and his distinguished associates such as Upadhyaya Brahma Bandhab, the great scholar who refused to defend himself in a British law court. The Society was formally established in 1902 as a cultural organization ; it had an organ of the same name from 1902 to 1913, and it ran a college in Bow Bazar Street called the National College in 1906. Rabindranath and Sister Nivedita were among the patrons of the Society which came to be known as Shakespeare Society. Keshav Chandra Gupta, Hriday Lal Banerjee, Satish Chandra Banerjee and others were the enthusiasts in the matter of putting on boards Shakespeare plays in the original. As Mr. Gupta reminisced of an evening in his study he seemed to regain some of his youthful urge. They usually held their rehearsals in the spacious halls of Dr. Narendra Nath Law and usually gave their performance in the Overtoun Hall or in the auditorium of the Society which came afterwards to be known as the University Institute Hall. Satish Chandra Mukherjee was not the director of the plays. It was Alexander Thomas, a lecturer in English at Duff College, who trained the members and occasionally the exuberant Professor Benoy Sarkar taught them a gesture or two. Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, Principal Rabindra Narayan Ghosh and the great Sir Asutosh Mookherjee were among those who enjoyed these performances and encouraged the members. Mr. Gupta recollects playing the part of Shylock and Cassius while his friend Hriday Lal Banerjee (now no more) played Portia. Once the Group played at the Belvedere in the presence of Sir Charles Gurney

and the then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal; after the play was over, an old lady came forward indignantly and asked Keshab Chandra Gupta (who played Shylock) why he hated Christians and wondered how he could be so wicked! Sir Charles Gurney made a sign to Gupta from a distance indicating that the lady was of weak mind.

The efforts of this Group went on till 1910 when perhaps the nationalistic movement sweeping over the country turned the attention of the members to other directions.

Thirtyfive years later was established the present Shakespeare Society of Bengal (Bangiya Shakespeare Parishad). Till 1963 it had its office in Bangabasi College. It has since been transferred to the Rabindra Bharati University.

This third Shakespeare Society has no formal links with its two predecessors and when Shri Nirendranath Ray and Shri Dhirendra Nath Ghosh of the Department of English of Bangabasi College succeeded, after a good deal of spade work, in setting up in 1954 a preparatory Committee of twelve, they had to do it all *de novo*. Sisir Kumar Bhaduri was then living and though he could not actively help, his very presence on the preparatory Committee, in those days of his failing health, was an inspiration to us. But the man behind the whole show was Professor Nirendranath Ray. The preparatory Committee drew up a constitution and after the election of the first executive committee the society began to function. Its first president was Dr. Subodh Chandra Sengupta and its first secretary, Sri Prasanta Kumar Basu. Currently, the president is Shri Hironmoy Banerjee, Vice-Chancellor of Rabindra-Bharati University, and the present writer is the secretary. The Society's aims and objects give shape to what lovers of Shakespeare in Bengal had all along been trying to realize through their inchoate and desultory attempts.

The society pledges itself to the propagation of Shakespeare in Bengali by undertaking faithful translations of the plays accompanied with informative introductions and notes in Bengali. Three of the plays—*The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It* and *Macbeth*—have already been published in Bengali translation under the Society's auspices but these are primarily individual efforts and not the fruits of coordinated labour of Shakespeare scholars. But these are pioneer efforts, not merely free translations made and staged by enthusiasts of the theatre. Among the old translators of Shakespeare's plays only Jyotirindranath Tagore may be said to have been guided by certain principles and it is he who tried and found the inadequacy of equilinear translation. Girish Chandra's *Macbeth* is vitiated by the intrusion of extraneous matter and extreme metrical licence. The Shakespeare Society does not want to put obstacles in the way of experimentation but what it proposes to encourage is a concerted and principled effort, not simple amateurishness.

The second aim of the Society is to put the "words" of Shakespeare

across to the audience and not the imitation of European naturalism on the stage. The Society is always eager to stage translations made under its own auspices. Its first effort was scenes from *As You Like It* and *Julius Caesar*. Its second effort was *The Merchant of Venice* in Sri Sunil Chatterji's translation. The Society again presented the Trial Scene of *The Merchant of Venice* in Bengali and without any costume before Sir Lewis Casson and Dame Sybil Thorndike on the occasion of their visit in 1955. The distinguished guests praised our efforts and Dame Sybil laid the whole emphasis in her speech not on stage-craft but on the 'text' of Shakespeare. Unfortunately the Society could not secure the co-operation of the professional stage. Professionals always put forward the plea that the theatre-goers of this country would not take to Shakespeare. Strange though it may sound, this was the plea of professionals all over the world until the spurt of Shakespeare productions throughout the world during the Quatercentenary year gave the lie to this excuse of the purveyors of culture and amusement. Owing to this non-cooperation of the professional stage the activities of the Society were limited to discussions and symposia only.

It started its work with renewed zeal in 1963 mainly through the help of the Rabindra-Bharati University where the Society is now housed. It celebrated the Quatercentenary by producing *The Merchant of Venice* in the original on the stage of the University. This was a unique production made possible through the joint efforts of the Society and the Rabindra-Bharati. This was Shakespeare in the original for the first time in the Society's history. The cast was all Bengali. The University authorities were good enough to publish a special number of its quarterly magazine, *Rabindra Bharati*, at the request of the Society. It was a memorial volume of studies in Shakespeare mainly in Bengali.

SHAKESPEARE IN CALCUTTA THEATRES

PALLAB SEN GUPTA

I

The Eighteenth Century

THE earliest ventures in staging Shakespeare plays in Calcutta go back to the eighteenth century. Young Writers of John Company set up a theatre hall in Calcutta four or five years before the Battle of Plassey.[1] From 'The Plan of the Fort William and the part of the city of Calcutta' by Lt. Willis (1753), we can locate the exact situation of this theatre, popularly known as the *Old Playhouse*. We have no records of the dramas staged there. The British Civilians, army-men, or housewives of those days did not leave behind them any reference to the plays; nor was there any newspaper in Calcutta at the time from which we might glean some evidence. We can at best conjecture that the Britons of David Garrick's age did not forget their Shakespeare in far Calcutta.

After the Playhouse was closed down during the battle for Calcutta between the Company and the Nawab of Bengal in 1756, there were no theatre houses in the city for a long period; the places for public entertainment were the taverns (such as the Harmonic or the London) where masquerades and fancy-balls were organized. In 1775, Calcutta saw its second theatre-house, The New Playhouse. An official document states that the managers of the old Playhouse had sent two pipes of Madeira to David Garrick in 1772 in grateful acknowledgement of the actor's services in the promotion of 'theatrical ability in such a distant land'.[2] It has recently come to light that being requested by some top officers of John Company, Garrick sent one of his pupils to Calcutta, with instructions about the staging of *Richard III* and *Hamlet*.[3] The New Playhouse (also called the Calcutta Theatre) of which Warren Hastings was a patron, was more fortunate than its predecessor; within five years of its establishment, the first printed newspaper of India, *The Bengal Gazette & General Advertiser*, commonly called *Hickey's Gazette*, after the name of the editor, came into existence and forthwith lent support to the theatre. Other periodicals were started in quick succession and from their pages we can collect reports of the performances given in this theatre. Besides,

some memoirs and letters written by some Englishmen of this period provide us with useful information.

The earliest record of a Shakespeare performance at Calcutta coincides with the publication of *The Bengal Gazette* in 1780. An advertisement in the 49th issue of the Gazette (23-30 December 1780) goes thus:

> The Managers of the Theatre having generously offered to give a Benefit play to Mr. Soubise, towards the completion of his Management, Mr. Soubise will appear on that night in the character of Othello and afterwards perform the part of Mungo in the entertainment. Monsieur B-vre is preparing a new Dance which, in compliment to the occasion, is to be called the African Fandange. The part of Iago will be attempted by the Author of *The Monitor* and *desdemona* [sic] by Mr. H—, a gentleman of doubtful gender.

The ironical tone of the advertisement makes us suspect that Hickey whose relations with *The Monitor* (a feature column in the Government Gazette) were anything but friendly, was having a dig at his adversary; in any case, a benefit night for Soubise was actually held in the Calcutta Theatre.

The next significant year is 1784 offering two events of importance in Calcutta's theatre-history. First, we have reports of a number of Shakespeare plays being staged in Calcutta on more than one occasion; one such occasion was on 13 April of the year when *Hamlet* was staged in The New Playhouse;[4] among other plays enrolled were *The Merchant of Venice* and *Romeo and Juliet*[5] (18 October and 23 October) while *Hamlet* was staged again on 18 November.[6] The second event of note was the arrival of a lot of Bell's monumental collection, *The British Theatre* (in 23 volumes) at Calcutta. The key-figure of the Calcutta theatre world at that time was Dr. Francis Rendell who had already earned some reputation in London as a follower of Garrick. This handsome young physician in service of the Company, the first to introduce actresses on the Calcutta stage, organized several shows of *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, *Henry IV*, and *Richard III*.[7] The next few years marked a lull for Shakespeare on the Calcutta stage. This is inexplicable since the newspaper records of the time show that there was a demand from the public for Shakespeare plays.[8] The next performance of a Shakespeare play—that of Richard III was on 24 January 1788.[9] On 19 November of that year, *The Merchant of Venice* was put on the stage.[10] In 1789, Mrs. Bristow, a well-known actress, established a theatre;[11] it was called Bristow's Theatre. The next year, a number of theatre patrons of Calcutta sent a medallion to Mrs. Sarah Siddons in appreciation of her talents in playing parts of Shakespeare heroines.[12]

In the closing years of the 18th century, although the prevalent taste in the playhouses was for cheap entertainment, readings from Shakespeare became a popular feature of school functions in Calcutta.

In those days most of the playhouses were situated in the Chowringhee-Dhurrumtolla area; a market of the locality came to be known as Shakespeare-Bazar![13] An interesting tribute to Shakespeare was paid at the Calcutta Theatre in November 1798 when one Mr. Morris decorated the walls of the theatre with paintings of scenes of Garrick's house on the Thames; one of the scenes showed Garrick himself standing before Shakespeare's statue.[14]

Two other facts should be noted here to form a full image of the theatre world of Calcutta at the close of the eighteenth century. In November 1795, the Russian Herasim Lebedeff, started staging Bengali versions of two English plays. One Gokulnath Das was associated with this venture.[15] The other fact to note was the establishment of another public playhouse, The Wheeler Place Theatre in 1798.[16]

II

New Century, New Trends

With the dawning of the new century, new trends crept into Shakespeare performance. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, a number of educational institutions, including the Hindu College, used to organize play-readings and performances of snippets from Shakespeare. Among the boy-participants were many who grew into distinguished personalities, such as Henry Louis Vivian Derozio and Madhusudan Dutt, names to conjure with in the intellectual history of Bengal. Outside academic circles, the demand for the re-appearance of Shakespeare plays in the theatre began to increase. In 1812, a new playhouse sprang up in Calcutta, The Athenaeum. Next year, The Amateur Dramatic Society, popularly known as the Chowringhee Theatre, was founded. Among the less known theatres were those at Chundernagar, Barrackpore, Dum Dum and Baithakkhana.[17] Of these many playhouses, the best was the Chowringhee Theatre which took the lead in staging Shakespeare plays. From the second decade of the nineteenth century, Shakespeare began to rule college theatricals as well as performances in professional houses. The first significant Shakespeare performance of the century was put up at the Chowringhee with *Macbeth* in the first week of April 1814.[18] We have found a reference to another performance which was put up in 1816 (the exact date cannot yet be determined) when *Henry V* was staged to collect a benefit fund for the families of soldiers who had been killed or disabled in the battle of Waterloo.[19] On 18 January 1824 was staged *Coriolanus* and the next notable performance at the Chowringhee was of *Macbeth* again on 27 February. *Richard III* was staged on 19 December 1828.[20] Shortly before this however an interesting event took place, as a contemporary account indicates:[21]

The following extraordinary scene occurred at an entertainment given by Sir Charles Metcalfe on the 21st December, 1827, to the Right Hon'ble the Governor-General and the Countess Amherst. The Company amounted to about 400 persons, comprising all the ranks, beauty and fashion of Calcutta. In the course of the evening, a group of visitors made their appearance in the proper costume of the principal characters in Shakespeare's plays, led on by Prospero, and the rear brought up by Dogberry. On reaching the gorgeous pavilion where the Governor-General and his party were seated, Prospero delivered an appropriate address. The several personages in the group then mixed in the dance, exhibiting sundry amusing anachronisms. Falstaff led out a fashionable beauty of the *ancien regime*. The Ghost of the father of Hamlet too might have been observed holding converse with Titania until scared a little by the sudden appearance of Bottom, who just brayed his appreciation of the scene and then vanished. Shylock also, for a moment, forgot his bond and spoke to some lady whom he recognized, while Henry VIII addressed Lady Percy, and Anna Boleyn replied to Dr. Caius who did not at all get surprised to see Oberon treading on the toes of the vernacular Dogberry, or the haughty Wolsey, holding a long confab with a jolly carter.

A serious performance was that of *The Merchant of Venice* in the Chowringhee Theatre on the 2nd January 1829.[22] On the 27th of the next month, Othello was staged;[23] this performance was led by J. H. Stocqueler and Mrs. Esther Leach, famous in Calcutta's theatre-world. Macbeth was staged two years later (the exact date is not known) and again after two more years.[24] In 1832, a performance of selected scenes was arranged, the plays being: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (II, iii), *Coriolanus* (III, ii, III, iii), *The Taming of the Shrew* (I), *King Lear* (III, iii), *Twelfth Night* (I, iii), *Hamlet* (III, iv) *Henry IV* (Part II, IV, ii), and *The Tempest* (V). Mrs. Leach appeared in several rôles (including Ariel, Catherina, Titania) while Stocqueler impersonated as Malvolio, Prospero, Justice Shallow, Lear. Other notable actors in the *Chowringhee Theatre* were Mrs. Godall-Atkinson, Mrs. Bland, Mrs. Francies, Mrs. Mary Gotlieb, Mrs. Kelley, Mrs. Black, and Mr. Block.[25] Of the other stages, the *Athenaeum* produced *Henry IV*, and Catherine and Petruchio, Garrick's version of The Taming of the Shrew.[26]

III

In Educational Institutions

The Chowringhee Theatre had two professors among its patrons, H. H. Wilson and D. L. Richardson. Even before these two learned scholars had come to be known widely, the Calcutta schoolboys had

made their *debut* on the amateur stage. An Advertisement in a local newspaper of that period (*The Calcutta Gazette*, 1822, 18th July and 5th September) betrays the intensity of love that Calcuttans had for plays and histrionics, referring to the fact that they were prepared to buy 42 volumes of Inchbald's British Theatre or to spend Rs. 18/- to procure a set of *Practical Illustrations of theatrical illustrations of theatrical gestures* of Sarah Siddons.[27]

The first report that we receive from the college campus about Shakespeare's dramas is associated with the name of Henry Derozio. In 1822, Derozio, then a boy of thirteen, was a student of Drummond's 'Dhurrumtollah Academy'. A local newspaper, the *India Gazette*, wrote on 31 December 1824: "The English recitations from different authors were extremely meritorious and reflect great credit upon the scholars and the teachers. A boy of the name Derozio gave a good conception of Shylock." It is also interesting to note that two years later, on the occasion of another dramatic performance at this school (20 January 1824), Derozio recited a poem of his own which included the following lines:[27]

> No mighty Kemble here stalks o'er the stage
> No Siddons all your feelings to engage,
> But a small band of young aspirant boys
> In faintest miniature the hour employs.

Thus it appears that even as far back as 1824, Calcutta schoolboys were aware of Kemble and Siddons. A few years later, Derozio wrote a couple of sonnets on Shakespearean subjects (on Romeo and Juliet, and Yorick's skull) and read the plays with his students in the Hindu College which he had joined as a teacher. On 27 January 1827, selected scenes from *Julius Caesar* were staged at a college function in which Kashiprasad Ghosh participated.[28] Next year, the trial scene was enacted by the Hindu College boys on the 12th January in the Government House; the cast was follows: The Duke (Krishnahari Nandi), Shylock (Kashiprasad Ghosh), Antonio (Atul Chandra Ganguli), Bassanio (Harish Chandra Das), Gratiano (Ram Chandra Mitra), Salarino (Kalikumar Bose), Portia (Krishnadhan Mitra), Nerissa (Harihar Mukherji). A contemporary comment on the performance went thus: "Surely then this may be called a remarkable epoch in the history of India, seeing as we do, the native youth of Bengal cultivating the dramatic literature of the West, and even encountering the difficulties of theatrical representations."[29] In the same year, on a similar occasion on the 27th February, the students of the School Society recited portions of *Henry V*. Madhusudan Sen and Hurry Mohun Mullick gave a play-reading of the dialogue between Henry and the Lord Chief Justice.[30] Next year, the students of the Hindu College organized a number of recitations from several plays (*Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *Troilus and Cres-*

sida, Cymbeline, 2 Henry VI, Hamlet) at the Government House on the 18th February. Notable among the reciters were the following who became distinguished citizens in later life: Krishna Mohun Banerjee (Horatio), Ramtonoo Lahiri (Brutus), Ramgopal Ghosh (Malcolm), Shibchandra Deb (Belarius), Radhanath Sikdar (Guiderius), Digambar Mitra (Cassius), Mahesh Chandra Singha (Ross), Dakshina Ranjan Mukherji (Macduff).[31] Next year, the laurels were won by the boys of the School Society. At their annual function on the 13th March at Gopimohan Deb's house at Shobhabazar, they staged a scene from *Julius Caesar*; the participants were: Ganganarain Chandra (Octavius), Woomachurn Bose (Antony), Madhusudan Pramanick (Brutus), Balaram Sen (Cassius). Compared to this performance, the show of the Hindu College boys was rather poor, but next year, they revived their prestige with *The Merchant of Venice* (Act III, sc. i) on the 12th February at the Town Hall, the cast being: Shylock (Kailash Chandra Datta), Tubal (Ramgopal Ghosh), Salanio (Taraknath Ghosh), Salarino (Bhubanmohan Mitra).[32]

The year 1831 is significant in the history of Shakespeare performance in this country inasmuch as a theatre troupe, specifically to stage Shakespeare's plays, was formed by Prasanna Kumar Tagore and staged *Julius Caesar*, as the *Samachar Darpan* (7 January 1832) tells us. On the continued performances of the Hindu College boys, contemporary documents offer fairly full reports.[33] We refer here to only a few of these performances. In 1833, scenes from *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Othello* were staged, one of the actors being Ramtonoo Lahiri; in 1834, Madhusudan Dutt (a boy of ten at that time) played the Duke of Gloucester in *Henry VI*; in 1837, the trial scene was staged; the performance for the 1838 included the soliloquies of Henry V, Richard III and Hamlet, recited respectively by Shymacharan Basu, Rajendranath Basu and Abhoycharan Basu.

From this period onwards, stage performances of plays or selected scenes, as a part of collegiate education began to decline. In 1840, Messrs. Geoffrey and Ritchie of the Oriental Seminary coached their boys in *Julius Caesar* but the play was not actually staged; some members of this team, along with several students of the Metropolitan Academy, staged it twelve years later, under the guidance of one Mr. Clinger.

IV

Talents from Overseas

We have mentioned the Chowringhee Theatre above. The famous theatre was burnt down on the night of the 31st May 1839. A home for Shakespeare in Calcutta however was found in an improvised theatre at the Esplanade by the uncrowned stage queen of the city, Mrs. Esther

Leach who presently succeeded in organizing the famous Sans Souci. The repute of this theatre spread far and wide; we learn that by November 1841, talented actors and actresses from England came over to Calcutta to join this company, notable among these being Mrs. Deacle (formerly Miss Darling of the Adelphi, praised by London journalists as 'gorgeous Cleopatra') and Miss Cowley. A few months earlier, another overseas actress had joined this theatre, Maria Madeline Taylor, well-known on the Australian stage. Maria Taylor's history is romantic. She left Sydney in the guise of a Baroness and after many hazards reached Calcutta with her husband. In Calcutta, she was given a ballet at the Sans Souci by the Manager, Mr. Stocqueler; on 5 April 1841, she appeared in the rôle of Katharina in *The Taming of the Shrew* at a show held at the Town Hall. On the evening of her first appearance at the Sans Souci, her husband died and she was unable to play; she however played three weeks later, on the 15th May, in the rôle of Katharina; her performance as well as a melancholy and beautiful speech she delivered at the beginning impressed the public deeply.[35] Some time later, Maria killed herself, for reasons never made clear.

Two years later, James Vining from London joined the Sans Souci; his first appearance as Shylock on the 2nd November 1843 was highly applauded by the public.[36] His principal colleagues at this performance were: Mrs. Deacle (Portia), Miss Cowley (Nerissa), Mrs. Leach (Jessica), Capt. Copp (Bassanio), Col. Britton (Gratiano), and Mr. Bartolo (Launcelot Gobbo). The repeat performance of a few days later ended in a tragedy when, as a farce was being played after the main play, Mrs. Leach's garments caught fire; the mishap led to her death. Thus this internationally well-known theatre lost two famous actresses in tragic circumstances within two years.[37] The Sans Souci continued its Shakespeare performances; on 20 December 1843, *Romeo and Juliet* was put on the boards; Vining appeared as Romeo, Mrs. Deacle as Juliet, Miss Cowley as Lady Capulet and Mr. Berry as the Nurse.[38] In the next title, Claude Melnotte appeared as the Prince of Denmark with Mrs. Ormonde as Ophelia; the exact date of this performance has not yet been ascertained.[39]

A landmark in the stage history of Bengal was the occasion when (17 August 1848) Baishnab Charan Addhya (a Bengali young man about whom, unfortunately, no detailed information is available) played Othello[40] to the Desdemona of Mrs. Anderson (the daughter of Mrs. Leach) at Sans Souci; the performance was repeated on the 12th of the next month. At the outset, the British newspapers declined to make any comment on this inter-racial co-operation in the theatre though the Indian papers loudly acclaimed the venture; within a short time however, the British journals too came forward with praise.[41] The Sans Souci closed down soon after this and the performance of *The Merchant*

of Venice on 20 May 1849 was the swan song of a theatre on the bank of the Ganges which, unlike its London namesake, was largely devoted to Shakespeare.

V

An Era of Decentralization

After the closure of the Sans Souci in 1849, the course of Shakespeare performances in Calcutta took a different turn. There was no longer any single playhouse that specialized in Shakespeare, and moreover, the practice of staging or play-reading Shakespeare revived among the students. We have already noted the staging of *Julius Caesar* in 1852 under the guidance of one Mr. Clinger. The students of the David Hare Academy twice staged *The Merchant of Venice* (16th and 24th February, 1853) under Mr. Clinger's guidance.[42] In the same year, the old and the new students of the Oriental Seminary twice staged *Othello* (on the 26th September and the 5th October). Mr. Roberts, formerly of the Sans Souci, Mr. Parker and Miss Ellis, both formerly of the Chowringhee Theatre, trained the boys under the general supervision of Mr. Clinger. The venue of these shows was 268 Chitpore Road, and the principal actors were: Dinanath Ghosh (Othello), Priyanath Dutta (Iago), Khagendranath Mullick (Brabantio), Raj Rajendra Mitra (Desdemona), and Radhaprasad Basak (Emilia).[43] The same group of Oriental Seminary twice staged *The Merchant of Venice* in 1854 (on the 2nd and the 17th March); Priyanath Dutta's Shylock and Radhaprasad Basak's Portia were particularly praised by the playgoers.[44] An English lady, Mrs. Grigg, participated in the second show as Portia.[45] In 1855, this group staged *Henry IV* on 15 February with Keshabchandra Ganguli as Henry, Priyanath Dutta as Falstaff, Nrityalal Ray as Hotspur.[46] In 1857, we find another report of this group's further venture with Shakespeare, but, unfortunately, the details are meagre.[47]

Besides these academic Shakespeareans, other groups undertook to play Shakespeare. Thus Pearymohun Basu of Jorasanko arranged a production of *Julius Caesar* at his residence in 1853, the most notable among the actors being Brajanath Basu;[48] next year, Pearymohun once again staged the same play on the 3rd May with the following cast: Caesar (Mahendranath Basu), Brutus (Krishnadhan Dutta), Cassius (Jadunath Chatterjee). The contemporary press was so loud in praise of this production that there was a repeat performance.[49]

By this time however Shakespeare had penetrated even into rural Bengal. An instance of this popularity is found in the report of a performance of *Hamlet* in the village of Gouribha in Hooghly district, some time in March 1857 at the residence of Keshab Chunder Sen, the distin-

guished social and religious reformer; the cast was as follows: Hamlet (Keshab Chunder), Laertes (Pratap Chunder Mazumdar), Horatio (Akshoy Kumar Mazumdar), Claudius (Mahendra Nath Sen), Polonius (Bholanath Chakravaarti), Ophelia (Narendra Nath Sen). Keshab Chunder designed the costumes and sets.[50] Another notable performance was held in May 1870 at Krishnanagar where the 'Sahitya Parishad', an association of the old and the new students of the college of the town arranged a show of *The Merchant of Venice*.[51]

VI

Shakespeare in Bengali Versions

By this period the dramatic literature of Bengal had taken a definite shape. Bengalees interested in drama and dramaturgy began to pay more attention to plays in their own language than to English plays. The first two dramas of modern Bengal, *Kirtibilas* (by Jogendra Chandra Gupta) and *Bhadrarjun* (by Tarini Charan Shikdar), both published in 1852, bear distinct traces of Shakespeare. The next play, *Bhanumati-Chittabilas* by Harachandra Ghosh (1853) was admittedly an adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice*. The list of writers who translated from or adapted Shakespeare's plays includes such outstanding names as Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Hemachandra Banerjee, Nabinchandra Sen, Girishchandra Ghosh, Jyotirindra Nath Tagore, and Rabindra Nath Tagore himself. Writers influenced by Shakespeare in writing original plays were Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Dinabandhu Mitra, Girish Chandra Ghosh, Dwijendra Lal Roy, and again, Rabindra Nath Tagore.

The professional stage, conducted by Indians wholly, came into existence with the foundation of the National Theatre in 1872; this theatre was followed by several others. Shakespeare was seldom produced on these stages but plays closely modelled on his were often put on the boards. Thus Rudrapal (*Macbeth*) by Haralal Roy was produced in the Great National Theatre on 31st October 1874;[52] next year, the Bengal Theatre produced *Othello* on 27 February in its Bengali version (called *Bhim Sinha*) made by Tarini Pal. During the last week of April 1889, a band of distinguished Indian ladies and gentlemen staged the *Comedy of Errors* (in Bengali translation) at the Corinthian Theatre. The most remarkable Shakespeare production in the professional theatre was Girish Chandra Ghosh's translation of *Macbeth* on 28 January 1893 when the all-star cast was as follows: Girish Chandra (Macbeth), Haribhusan (Duncan), Aghor Pathak (Macduff), Dani Babu (Malcolm), Nikhilendra (Donalbain), Kumud Sarkar (Banquo), Tinkari Dasi (Lady Macbeth), Pramada Sundari (Lady Macduff), Ardhendu Mustafi (First

Witch, Old Man, Murderer, Doctor). The Director was one Mr. Willard and the music master was Devkantha Bagchi.[53] This performance as well as the next, though highly appreciated by the *elite* were financial flops and Girish was obliged to abandon his grand plan of translating some more dramas of Shakespeare and staging them one after another.[54] The next noteworthy occasion was the performance of '*Hariraj*' (Hamlet) by Nagendranath Chowdhury, at the Classic Theatre on 21 June, 1897. The cast was as follows: Hariraj (Amarendra Dutta), Jayakar (Mantu Basu), Dadhimukh (Bholanath Das), Kaladhwaj (Gosthabehari Chakravarty), Srilekha (Rani), Queen Aruna (Tarasundari).[55] Previous to this occasion, a few performances of this play were organized by the Victoria Club, in which a few members of this group participated under the directorship of Chandrakumar Sen. On 27 January, 1899, some students of Calcutta Colleges, staged *Julius Caesar* at the University Institute.[56]

VII

The Early Twenties

The University Institute group gradually developed into a fine Shakespeare company. They staged *Macbeth* in 1900 with Jnan Basu as Macbeth and Kiron Dutt as Macduff;[57] their next notable productions were *Twelfth Night* and *Julius Caesar* in 1905 and 1906. Dr. Rajendraprasad, the first President of India, then a student of the Presidency College, participated in the former performance in which he appeared as one of the courtiers, and Mr. Kanti Mukherjee appeared as Viola.[58]

Two years later, the students of the General Assemblies Institution (now Scottish Church College) staged *Julius Caesar*. This was a significant performance because Sisir Kumar Bhaduri who afterwards won distinction as the maestro of the modern Bengali theatre, then an undergraduate, appeared in the rôle of Brutus; furthermore, with this performance were closely associated two distinguished Bengalee scholars of today, both undergraduates at the time, Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, a National Professor, and Dr. Srikumar Banerjee. Suniti Kumar was in charge of costume design. Next year, Sisir Kumar appeared in the rôle of Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice* while Naresh Mitra (another gifted actor of later years) played Shylock. This performance too was held under the auspices of the General Assemblies Institution. Sisir Kumar appeared again in a Shakespeare play when, on 17 March 1909, *Hamlet* was staged in the University Institute. He was responsible for two rôles, that of Claudius and that of the Ghost. The same year, a British actor, Charles Venn, appeared in the title rôle of *Hamlet*

in the Star Theatre on 22 September.[59] Insofar as the acting of Shakespeare's plays in the professional theatre of Calcutta is concerned, the performance of *Cleopatra* (a translation of *Antony and Cleopatra* by Pramathanath Bhattacharya) on 5 September 1914 at the *Minerva* was important; the cast was thus distributed: Antony (Dani Babu), Caesar (Priyanath Ghosh), Cleopatra (Tarasundari), Charmian (Nirada) and Octavia (Sarojini). The next few notable Shakespeare performances were held in the Star Theatre. In 1915, *Saudagar* (adapted from *The Merchant of Venice* by Bhupendra Nath Banerjee) was staged twice on the 4th and 11th December, with the following cast: Kulirak (Amarendra Dutt), Anilkumar (Dhirendra Mukherjee), Basantakumar (Kunjalal Chakravarti), Niranjan (Handu Babu), Pratibha (Kusumkumari), Niraja (Narayani). During the second show on the 11th, Amarendra suddenly became indisposed and retired from the boards, Kunjalal taking his place; Amarendra died a few days later. On the 8th March 1919, the translation of *Othello* by Devendranath Basu was staged at the Star with the following cast: Othello (Tarak Palit), Iago (Aparesh Babu), Desdemona (Tarasundari), Cassio (Prabodh Basu), Bianca (Manimala) and Emilia (Niradasundari). Devendranath Basu's *Kuhaki*, an adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was staged in the Star Theatre on 19 June 1920.

We have traced the historical outlines of Shakespeare productions, in the original English as well as in Bengali translations and adaptations, in the Calcutta theatres down to the present century. If any drama-minded statistician were to draw a graph of Shakespeare productions in Bengal after the nineteen twenties, he would perhaps find a curve with a downward incline. For years, the frequency and quality of Shakespeare productions went down. The reasons for this decline are complex and far from clear and not amenable to a detailed analysis in this essay. It may be that Gandhiji's Non-cooperation movement launched at the very beginning of the third decade of the century brought into prominence certain changes in public taste and demand that did not accord well with the old taste for Shakespeare; the Bengali drama of the nineteen twenties had to bear a new burden and convey new values. For some three decades till Independence, Shakespeare came to be relegated to college theatricals and that too without the enthusiasm of earlier years.

After Independence however, there was a revival of interest in Shakespeare. Outside the professional theatres (for whom, understandably, box-room returns are of utmost importance and who have to compete with the uncounted cinema houses of the city), there are now in Calcutta a number of groups intent on experimental drama. They are naturally eclectic in their choice, the overwhelming consideration always being the usefulness of the play chosen (either a direct trans-

lation from any language, any dramatic tradition, or an adaptation, or sometimes an adaptation which retains no more than a very tenuous reminiscence of the original) for the organization of the New Bengali Drama. Particularly notable among such groups is the Little Theatre Group which made its *debut* in August 1947 with selected scenes of *Romeo and Juliet*; other admirable productions of the Group are: *Richard III*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Othello* (both in Bengali and English), *The Merchant of Venice* (Bengali), *Julius Caesar* (Bengali), *Chaitali Rater Swapna* (Bengali translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*).[60] Among other organizations, devoted to the same praiseworthy aim of establishing the 'Naba Natya Andolan', the Movement for the New Bengali Drama, who have staged Shakespeare are: The Bangiya Shakespeare Parishad (The Shakespeare Society of Bengal)—*Macbeth* (in Bengali); Udayachal—*Hamlet* and *Othello* in Bengali; Aikyatan—*The Merchant of Venice* and *King Lear*; The Theatre Unit—*Julius Caesar* in Bengali; Prachya Vani—*The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* in Sanskrit; Shouvanik—*Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice*. The efforts of all those many Groups in Bengal involved in the Movement for New Drama deserve careful study; the present essay has a very limited aim of considering the landmarks of Shakespeare productions only.

VIII

Troupes from Overseas

The first visiting troupe to perform Shakespeare plays in Calcutta was the Lewis Theatre which used to play on improvised stages in the Maidan; the Company used to visit Calcutta in the winter of the early seventies of the last century. In 1882, the troupe led by Herr Bandmann gave several shows of *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard III* and *Othello*. In 1911 Matheson Lang came to Calcutta with his party and staged *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Hamlet*. Almost at the same time came the London Repertory Company led by Allen Wilkie and staged *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *The Merchant of Venice*. Next year, Lang's party reappeared; this time they staged *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and also *Much Ado About Nothing*. In 1918, a group led by Messrs Howit and Harding came to Calcutta.

In the years after Independence, several English troupes have visited Calcutta: Geoffrey Kendall's (once in 1949-50 and again in 1954-55); Eric Elliott's (1952); Marius Goring's (December 1958). In 1960, the Oxford Playhouse came to stage *Twelfth Night*; in 1962, the Bristol Old Vic staged *Hamlet*; in 1963, the experimental troupe of

Harold Lang played, not Shakespeare but a clever argument on how Shakespeare is to be produced; the New Shakespeare Company of David Williams, visiting in the quatercentenary year, staged *The Tempest*, *Richard II*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*.

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